



Washington State Fusion Center INFOCUS



FRIDAY — 30 SEP 2022

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Events, Opportunities

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HEADLINE	09/29 National Guard activates 5,000
SOURCE	https://www.newsmax.com/newsfront/hurricane-ian-florida-national-guard/2022/09/29/id/1089733/
GIST	The National Guard announced Thursday that it would activate over 5,000 guardsmen across Florida, Louisiana, New York, and Tennessee to assist with Hurricane Ian clean-up.

According to a statement by the military branch, the troops will also utilize 16 helicopters, 1,640 high-wheeled vehicles, seven boats, and 36 fuel tankers to conduct search and rescue operations, clear roads, and support local law enforcement.

"This is primarily where our assets and high-water vehicles can really get in there and control those areas where people might be trapped or in danger to try to get them to safety as quickly as possible," stated National Guard Bureau Chief Daniel Hokanson, a four-star Army general.

The Guard will also assist with returning power to areas hit heavily by outages, mobilizing the Florida Guard's 146th Expeditionary Signal Battalion to provide emergency communication through generators.

Currently, Florida Power & Light estimates that Lee County has over 245,000 customers without power out of 288,630 total customers in the area. Neighboring Charlotte County boasted even more staggering numbers, with 111,170 out of 126,690 lacking power.

"We are preparing for Hurricane Ian by giving our soldiers training on the Transportable Tactical Command Communications Ground Antenna Transmit and Receive devices," Sgt. Justin Love stated earlier this week.

"This training will allow us to support emergency operation centers when services are needed, such as phone service and internet," he added.

The news comes as southwestern Florida has been rocked by Ian, which made landfall as a Category 4 at 155 miles per hour on Wednesday into Thursday morning, The Hill reported.

President Joe Biden recently suggested the storm "could be the deadliest" in Florida's history.

"The numbers are still unclear, but we're hearing early reports of what may be substantial loss of life," Biden said, adding that authorities continue to see "millions of people without power and thousands hunkered down in schools and community centers."

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HEADLINE	09/30 Inflation hits record 10% in Europe
SOURCE	https://www.newsmax.com/finance/streettalk/europe-inflation-10/2022/09/30/id/1089765/
GIST	<p>Inflation in the European countries using the euro currency has broken into double digits as prices for electricity and natural gas soar, signaling a looming winter recession for one of the globe's major economies as higher prices undermine consumers' spending power.</p> <p>Consumer prices in the 19-country eurozone rose a record 10% in September from a year earlier, up from an annual 9.1% in August, EU statistics agency Eurostat reported Friday. Only a year ago inflation was as low as 3.4%.</p> <p>Price increases are at their highest level since record-keeping for the euro started in 1997.</p> <p>Energy prices were the main culprit, rising 40.8% over a year ago. Food, alcohol and tobacco jumped 11.8%</p> <p>Inflation has been fueled by steady cutbacks in supplies of natural gas from Russia and by bottlenecks in getting supplies of raw materials and parts as the global economy bounces back from the COVID-19 pandemic. The Russian cutbacks have sent gas prices soaring to the point where energy-intensive businesses such as fertilizer and steel say they can no longer make some products at a profit.</p> <p>Meanwhile, high prices for utility bills, food and fuel are leaving consumers with less money to spend on other things. That is the main reason economists are predicting a recession, or a serious and long-lasting downturn in economic activity, for the end of this year and the first months of next year.</p>

The European Central Bank is raising interest rates to combat inflation by keeping higher prices from being baked into people's expectations for wages and prices, but can't by itself lower energy prices.

European officials say the cutbacks in pipeline gas from Russia's state-owned exporter Gazprom are energy blackmail aimed at pressuring and dividing European governments over Western sanctions against Russia and their support for Ukraine, including weapons deliveries.

Higher gas prices feed through into higher heating bills and higher electricity costs because natural gas is used to generate power, heat homes and run factories.

Prices in Germany, the largest single eurozone economy, rose 10.9%, hitting double digits for the first time in decades. Germany plans to spend up to 200 billion euros (\$195 billion) helping consumers and businesses cope with surging gas bills.

Chancellor Olaf Scholz said Thursday that the government was reactivating an economic stabilizing fund previously used during the global financial crisis and the coronavirus pandemic.

Shoppers at a weekly outdoor market in Cologne, Germany, said higher food prices and utility bills were on their minds.

"I'm already looking a lot more for special offers," said Myriam Maierhofer, a 64-year-old trainer and coach for staff development. "I don't throw away so much so quickly, so I've become more economical with food. And this morning, I also turned down the heating in the rooms again."

Christian Schrader, 35, is less worried about food prices but said that "you start to think about which rooms need to be heated in the flat and try to explain to the children that we only play in one room."

A bigger worry was "the social dimension," he said. "Inflation has often been a driver for social division, for extreme tendencies, for populism. This dimension worries me more."

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HEADLINE	09/29 New guidance student loan forgiveness
SOURCE	https://www.newsmax.com/newsfront/education-loans/2022/09/29/id/1089724/
GIST	<p>The Biden administration on Thursday changed its guidance on who qualifies for federal student loan forgiveness, hours after six Republican-led states filed a challenge to its student debt cancellation program.</p> <p>President Joe Biden said in August that the U.S. government will forgive \$10,000 in student loans for millions of debt-saddled former college students, keeping a pledge he made in the 2020 campaign for the White House.</p> <p>The decision from the U.S. Department of Education on Thursday affects Federal Family Education loan (FFEL) borrowers - whose loans were issued and managed by private banks but guaranteed by the federal government - and does not allow them to consolidate their loans and qualify for debt relief.</p> <p>Earlier, the department's website advised these borrowers that they could consolidate these loans into federal direct loans and qualify for relief.</p> <p>On Thursday, the department changed the language to: "As of Sept. 29, 2022, borrowers with federal student loans not held by ED cannot obtain one-time debt relief by consolidating those loans into Direct Loans."</p> <p>According to federal data, more than 4 million borrowers still have commercially-held FFEL loans.</p> <p>It was not immediately clear what led to the decision.</p>

"As recently as yesterday, the site said they were working on a solution for these borrowers," Betsy Mayotte, president of the Institute of Student Loan Advisors, tweeted. "This is a gut punch, to say the least."

Earlier on Thursday, in a lawsuit, Nebraska, Arkansas, Iowa, Kansas, Missouri and South Carolina asked the court for an immediate temporary restraining order pausing the student debt relief program.

The lawsuit argued that when FFEL borrowers consolidate their old loans into federal direct loans, private banks essentially lose business.

The lawsuit comes two days after conservative group Pacific Legal Foundation filed a federal lawsuit with the intent of stopping Biden's student loan cancellation plan.

On Monday, the Congressional Budget Office said Biden's plan to cancel some student loan debt will cost \$400 billion.

Critics of the plan raised concerns over its inflationary impact, while the White House said it was fiscally justified because the federal deficit was on track to drop by \$1.7 trillion reduction in the current fiscal year compared with the prior year. The smaller deficit is largely due to the end of many COVID-19 aid programs and unexpectedly higher revenues.

As of June 30, 43 million borrowers held \$1.6 trillion in federal student loans. About \$430 billion of that debt will be canceled, the CBO estimated. The CBO previously projected that some of the funds canceled by Biden's action would eventually have been forgiven anyway.

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HEADLINE	09/29 Russia opens more border draft offices
SOURCE	https://apnews.com/article/russia-ukraine-georgia-kazakhstan-finland-7555f194fbee187e2758978c4b34ea2f
GIST	<p>Russian authorities are opening more military enlistment offices near Russia's borders in an apparent effort to intercept some of the Russian men of fighting age who are trying to flee the country by land to avoid getting called up to fight in Ukraine.</p> <p>A new draft office opened at the Ozinki checkpoint in the Saratov region on Russia's border with Kazakhstan, regional officials said Thursday. Another enlistment center was set to open at a crossing in the Astrakhan region, also on the border with Kazakhstan.</p> <p>Earlier this week, makeshift Russian draft offices were set up near the Verkhny Lars border crossing into Georgia in southern Russia and near the Torfyanka checkpoint on Russia's border with Finland. Russian officials said they would hand call-up notices to all eligible men who were trying to leave the country.</p> <p>Over 194,000 Russian citizens have fled to neighboring Georgia, Kazakhstan and Finland — most often by car, bicycle or on foot — since Russian President Vladimir Putin last week announced a partial mobilization of reservists. In Russia, the vast majority of men under age 65 are registered as reservists.</p> <p>The Kremlin has said it plans to call-up some 300,000 people, but Russian media reported that the number could be as high as 1.2 million, a claim that Russian officials have denied.</p> <p>Russia's Defense Ministry has promised to only draft those who have combat or service experience, but according to multiple media reports and human rights advocates, men who don't fit the criteria are also being rounded up.</p> <p>The official decree on mobilization, signed by Putin last week, is concise and vague, fueling fears of a broader draft.</p>

In an apparent effort to calm the population, Putin told Russia's Security Council on Thursday that mistakes had been made in the mobilization. He said that Russian men mistakenly called up for service should be sent back home, and that only reservists with proper training and specialties should be summoned to serve.

"It's necessary to deal with each such case independently, but if there is a mistake, I repeat, it must be fixed. It's necessary to bring back those who were drafted without proper reason," Putin stressed.

The mass exodus of Russian men — alone or with their families or friends — began Sept. 21, shortly after Putin's address to the nation, and continued all this week. Airline tickets to destinations abroad have sold out days in advance, even at unprecedentedly high prices.

Long lines of cars formed on roads leading to Russia's borders. Russian authorities tried to stem the outflow by turning back some men at the borders, citing mobilization laws, or setting up draft offices at border checkpoints.

The bus stations in Samara and Tolyatti, two large Russian cities in the Samara region, on Thursday halted service to Uralsk, a border city in Kazakhstan.

Finland announced that it would ban Russian citizens with tourist visas from entering the country starting Friday. With the exception of Norway, which has only one border crossing with Russia, Finland has provided the last easily accessible land route to Europe for Russian holders of European Schengen-zone visas. The Nordic country has taken in tens of thousands of people fleeing the military call-up in recent days.

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HEADLINE	09/29 Used cars remain unaffordable for many
SOURCE	https://www.cnn.com/2022/09/29/business/used-cars-unaffordable/index.html
GIST	<p>New YorkCNN Business — High prices and rising interest rates are putting used cars out of reach for a growing number of car shoppers.</p> <p>That's bad news for CarMax, the nation's largest used car dealer. CarMax reported Thursday that its earnings plunged 54% as the number of cars it sold in the quarter fell 6.4% compared to a year ago.</p> <p>The company blamed "vehicle affordability challenges that stem from widespread inflationary pressures, as well as climbing interest rates and low consumer confidence."</p> <p>Although higher prices lifted the company's overall revenue, the results were well below forecasts from analysts surveyed by Refinitiv. That set off alarm bells for investors. CarMax (KMX) shares plunged more than 24% Thursday, and other car retailers' stocks were also hammered. Shares of used car rival Carvana (CVNA) fell about 23% and AutoNation (AN), the nation's largest new car dealer, fell 10%. Shares of many automakers, including General Motor (GM), Ford (F), Stellantis and Tesla (TSLA), were also lower.</p> <p>Car prices have been climbing steadily for the last two years, as a shortage of parts, particularly computer chips, has limited supply in the face of strong consumer demand. Those higher prices have been a major factor in overall inflationary pressures since roughly 40% of US households buy a car each year.</p> <p>The effort to curb prices has prompted the Federal Reserve to raise interest rates at an historic pace in recent months as the central bank tries to ease consumer demand and slow the economy.</p> <p>Used car prices — although down 2% in August from the record high reached in January — are still up 48% from August 2019, according to the Consumer Price Index, a key inflation measure. New car prices hit a record in August, up 30% over the last three years.</p>

	<p>CarMax reported an average per vehicle sale price of \$28,657 in the three months ending in August, up 9.6% from a year earlier, but down 1% from the previous quarter.</p> <p>But it's not just the cost of buying and financing a car that was a drag on sales, according to CarMax executives. The overall pressures on household budgets from higher prices across the board has become an issue.</p> <p>"Groceries are higher than ever," said CarMax CEO William Nash on a call with investors. "Consumer confidence, certainly during the quarter, all-time low as far as recent history, I mean even lower than the height of the pandemic. So I just think consumers are prioritizing their spend a little differently."</p> <p>The company's results were also hurt because of increased reserves to cover potential loan losses at its finance arm. CarMax more than doubled the \$35.5 million it held in reserve a year ago to \$75.5 million at the end of the most recent quarter.</p>
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HEADLINE	09/29 NATO formally blames sabotage on leaks
SOURCE	https://www.wsj.com/articles/nato-formally-blames-sabotage-for-nord-stream-pipeline-damage-11664449396?mod=hp_lead_pos3
GIST	<p>NATO said that a series of leaks on the Nord Stream pipelines between Russia and Europe were the result of sabotage and that attacks on its members' infrastructure would be met with a collective response from the military alliance.</p> <p>The statement, from the North Atlantic Council, the decision-making body of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, didn't provide details or evidence. It also noted that the damage to the pipelines occurred in international waters. But it marks the first time the alliance has formally warned that it would deter and defend against attacks on its members' critical infrastructure following the now four documented leaks in the Nord Stream and Nord Stream 2 pipelines.</p> <p>NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg separately wrote on Twitter that the sabotage on the pipelines was of "deep concern."</p> <p>"NATO is committed to deter and defend against hybrid attacks," he wrote. "Any deliberate attack against Allies' critical infrastructure would be met with a united and determined response."</p> <p>At a NATO meeting Wednesday evening, Danish officials said the pipelines were damaged by two explosions on Monday, each with the force of about 1,100 pounds of TNT, officials familiar with the discussions said.</p> <p>Swedish and Danish authorities said Thursday that a total of four leaks—two in the waters of each country—had been verified. The Swedish Coast Guard said the fourth leak—the second in Swedish waters—was discovered earlier this week around the same time as the first. The second leak is smaller, and emissions from that leak are weakening, according to the agency's ongoing surveillance of the site.</p> <p>The aftermath of the leaks threatens to expand the theater of the conflict in Ukraine, which so far has mostly been confined to Ukraine's borders, and to conflate it with the economic war playing out between Russia and the West. While the incidents don't affect Europe's gas supply—the pipelines aren't now in use—they have raised fears about the security of the continent's energy systems as governments work to build up their gas supplies for the winter.</p> <p>The North Atlantic Council, which consists of representatives from all 30 NATO governments, didn't name a culprit behind the Baltic Sea leaks, though officials in several member countries have already attributed the destruction to Russia, without providing evidence.</p>

Russia has denied involvement in the damage to the pipeline and the Kremlin has called it “a terrorist attack, possibly at the state level.”

Presidential spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters Thursday that much more NATO than Russian hardware is in the area where the pipeline leaks have occurred.

“This area is the Baltic Sea. There were many more aircraft, ships or other marine vehicles from NATO countries there,” he said. “So, these reports [of Russia’s involvement] are absolutely ridiculous...and biased.”

The council didn’t say how it arrived at its assessment that the damage, which it said has caused environmental fallout and shipping disruptions.

It said the military alliance would be prepared to defend its infrastructure from attacks by both foreign governments and individuals acting without explicit state backing.

“All currently available information indicates that this is the result of deliberate, reckless, and irresponsible acts of sabotage,” the council said. “We, as Allies, have committed to prepare for, deter and defend against the [coercive use of energy](#) and other hybrid tactics by state and non-state actors.”

U.S. officials said they were ready to help investigate the leaks.

The NATO statement marks a ratcheting up of tensions between Russia and the West, as Russian President Vladimir Putin pushes ahead with [plans to annex occupied parts](#) of eastern and southern Ukraine. Russian officials have warned that any attack on those still-contested territories, which include areas where fighting is under way, would be [considered an attack on Russia itself](#).

Several senior European diplomats said there was little serious doubt in capitals that Russia was behind the pipeline damage but that it was important to be absolutely certain given the implications of reaching that conclusion. During a meeting late Wednesday, NATO member countries said it was likely that Russia was responsible for the leaks, but most countries didn’t want to publicly mention their suspicions in the public statement without more evidence, these diplomats said.

Even before Thursday’s statement, leaders of Denmark and Poland publicly blamed the leaks on sabotage, as did Sweden, which is awaiting approvals from Hungary and Turkey [to join the alliance](#).

“If it would be just one leak, this could have been an accident,” said Poland’s Deputy Foreign Minister Paweł Jabloński. “But a situation where we have several simultaneous leaks points to an action that was purposeful. This is the main reason.”

He added, “What I can say is we certainly should take into account the possibility that Russia is behind this. While Nord Stream 2 was never operational and Nord Stream 1 was suspended, it was clear that Russia is no longer having any profits from this, so damaging this and using it as a false pretense for an escalation of the war would be something out of Russia’s playbook...especially as it could be attributed as a false-flag attack.”

NATO members have long harbored concerns about attacks on what they deem critical infrastructure, a term that has come to include telecommunications networks but also encompasses energy pipelines such as the two Nord Stream projects.

The Russian pipes have two different owners. Nord Stream is owned by a Switzerland-based company, Nord Stream AG. Its shareholders include Russia’s state-gas exporter Gazprom PJSC as well as European energy companies such as Germany’s Wintershall Dea AG and France’s Engie SA. The project, pushed by Mr. Putin and Germany’s then-Chancellor Angela Merkel, was launched in 2011 despite protests by Eastern European and Ukrainian leaders who said it would give Russia additional leverage over European

	<p>energy markets. Over the next decade, it overtook Ukraine as the biggest route for Russian gas into Europe.</p> <p>Ms. Merkel pursued a second subsea pipeline, Nord Stream 2, owned by a Swiss subsidiary of Gazprom, despite U.S. objections. Engineers finished laying the pipe in 2021 and it was expected to double the volume of gas that Russia could send directly to Germany. Ms. Merkel's successor, Olaf Scholz, indefinitely suspended authorization for the pipeline days before Russia's invasion of Ukraine in February. The U.S. has hit the company with sanctions.</p> <p>The Nord Stream pipelines are vast, laid mostly along the seabed, each more than 750 miles long. The explosions were large enough to be detected by seismographs in Sweden.</p> <p>The leaks raised nerves among traders about the prospect for further supply disruptions. Russia had already throttled gas exports to Europe in recent months in what European officials have called an economic attack.</p>
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HEADLINE	09/29 War raises Putin's risk at home, abroad
SOURCE	https://www.wsj.com/articles/escalation-of-ukraine-war-effort-raises-risks-to-russias-putin-at-home-and-abroad-11664477209?mod=hp_lead_pos8
GIST	<p>MOSCOW—Russia is planning triumphant ceremonies and public rallies as President Vladimir Putin prepares to formally annex a broad, additional swath of neighboring Ukraine in the coming days.</p> <p>The celebrations are set to echo the pomp and circumstance that accompanied Russia's seizure of Ukraine's Crimean Peninsula eight years ago, an event that Mr. Putin marked in the imperial grandeur of the Kremlin's gilded St. George's Hall.</p> <p>Russia's capture of Crimea was quick and nearly bloodless and vaulted Mr. Putin to new heights of popularity at home.</p> <p>Today, the new annexations, as well as a series of unpopular moves putting the country on war footing, raise the risk of overreach as he grasps for a breakthrough in the Ukraine war, say political analysts.</p> <p>The annexations will up the ante in a war that Russia has been losing, and leaves Mr. Putin dangerously short of exit options, the analysts say.</p> <p>In annexing the occupied territories, Russia will declare sovereignty over provinces that it only partially controls and where Ukrainian troops are advancing. If Russia fails to reverse the tide with 300,000 hastily trained troops that Mr. Putin mobilized last week, he faces the prospect of a wider draft of military-aged men that would be deeply unpopular inside the country.</p> <p>Nationalist politicians are pressing Mr. Putin to declare martial law that would put the economy on a wartime footing, close Russia's borders to stop the tens of thousands of draft-age men who have fled the country since last week and possibly impose some restrictions on foreigners.</p> <p>Mr. Putin will participate in a Kremlin ceremony Friday in which four regions of Ukraine will formally be accepted into Russia, signing treaties in the Kremlin's St. George's Hall. Moscow has closed off roads around the Kremlin, in anticipation of a concert on Red Square and rally that will continue into the evening.</p> <p>Next week the upper house of Russia's parliament is expected to rubber stamp the annexation of the occupied Ukrainian territories. The festivities, while harking back to spring of eight years ago, precede what promises to be a bloody and difficult winter. Unlike the quick seizure of Crimea in 2014, the war in Ukraine since February has cost Moscow at least 80,000 wounded or killed, according to Western estimates.</p>

Those casualties are likely to grow, as Russia tries to stanch the Ukrainian advance and claw back territory it lost before Ukrainian offensives in recent weeks.

The mobilization has already exposed festering class resentments inside Russia and triggered protests in heavily working class and minority regions, in addition to Moscow and St. Petersburg. More than 100,000 people have left the country since Mr. Putin issued the order last week. They join several hundred thousand others [who left Russia](#) in the months after the February invasion.

Top Russian officials have expressed no regrets about the exodus. The head of Russia's election commission, Ella Pamfilova, likened departees earlier this week to rats deserting a ship. Without them, "the ship will only be easier," she said, according to the commission's Telegram channel.

The head of Russia's State Duma, Vyacheslav Volodin, called them cowards "who have not yet smelled gunpowder but have already hidden under the bed." Cars, abandoned at the border by men who decided to flee on foot, should be seized and donated to Russian soldiers fighting in Ukraine, he said.

Andrei Kolesnikov, a senior fellow with the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, said that coming festivities around the annexation might help add to a veneer of calm. But below the surface are deep worries about Mr. Putin's direction, he says.

"There is no joy, as there was, because back then it was an act of pure patriotic delight—the capture of a culturally and historically important land, Crimea, without a single shot being fired," he said. "But here it is a bloodbath. Putin is forcing Russian men to share responsibility for the war with him."

Polls suggested that the mobilization would be deeply unpopular with Russians, but Mr. Putin had little choice given the large losses on the battlefield. State-controlled television, which earlier this month announced it was dialing back its coverage of the war, has resumed broadcasting stories of triumph on the battlefield and featuring footage of recruitment stations where young men are volunteering.

The mobilization has won plaudits from Russia's hard-line nationalists. They want Mr. Putin to take the war effort further, saying a broad mobilization would heal Russia's divisions.

"If there is a war, then everyone participates in the war—billionaires, the poor, residents of small towns, urbanites, scientists, the homeless, the president and his family and my own family," wrote Alexander Prokhanov, editor of the nationalist newspaper Zavtra, last week.

Mr. Prokhanov didn't respond to requests for comment.

Mr. Prokhanov, whose work has long bemoaned the fall of the Soviet Union and, after the seizure of Crimea, praised the political order of North Korea, said he looked forward to mobilization of "the entire country, the restoration of deep justice through this mobilization."

Top officials in parliament have lately called for restrictions on borders, only to be contradicted by Kremlin officials.

In his address last week, Mr. Putin described the call-up of troops as a partial mobilization that will activate only veterans and reservists. But fears have quickly spread of a general draft and a broader mobilization that would affect the economy too, and require by law businesses to help register their staff if qualified for military service and also assist in supplying the military.

Pro-Kremlin foreign policy voices in Russia have rallied behind the mobilization. In an interview published this week, Sergey Karaganov, head of Russia's Council on Foreign and Defense Policy, said Russia is fighting for its survival in Ukraine.

Mr. Putin hinted that Russia could resort to nuclear strikes to defend itself from what he describes as aggression on the part of the U.S. and Ukraine's other allies. In the interview, Mr. Karaganov suggested that the U.S. wouldn't retaliate if Russia were to strike a minor city in Poland.

"They will retaliate with a nuclear strike against Russia's limited use of nuclear weapons only if there is a lunatic in the White House," Mr. Karaganov told Russia's Profile magazine. "Or a person who hates America and is ready to sacrifice, say, Boston for the sake of Poznan."

Officials from the Biden administration have said that it has warned Russia that it would face "catastrophic consequences" if it uses nuclear weapons in Ukraine.

Pollsters say most Russians have shown little enthusiasm for fighting in Ukraine. However, public protests remain muted, while the Kremlin quickly suppressed demonstrations that emerged over the last week against the mobilizations.

Civic groups that would connect disgruntled servicemen with one another or help Russians avoid conscription have been abolished or driven underground by Mr. Putin's vast security establishment. Those groups could coalesce, however, as the war drags on.

Mr. Putin, who has long argued that Ukraine's borders were an accident of Soviet planning and is historically an integral part of Russia, published a lengthy treatise last year that amounted to a pretext for invading, falsely saying that Ukraine never had been an independent state and lacked its own culture or language.

While Mr. Putin has repeated those arguments on television and in interviews since then, it isn't clear that many Russians or even Kremlin elites share his view, said Thomas Graham, a distinguished fellow at the Council on Foreign Relations.

Mr. Graham said the lack of enthusiasm will sap the war effort. "If you look at the history, the Russians are tenacious about defending their own territory," Mr. Graham said. "It's a little bit different fighting outside—and dying for what? A lot of Russians don't care about the historic idea that Ukraine is part of Russia."

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HEADLINE	09/29 Companies still hiring as GDP shrinking
SOURCE	https://www.wsj.com/articles/labor-market-layoffs-inflation-recession-11664462809?mod=hp_lead_pos9
GIST	<p>A persistent economic puzzle is why labor is still so tight amid slowing growth, high inflation and growing fears of recession.</p> <p>Gross domestic product growth slipped into negative territory in the first half of the year. Borrowing costs have risen steeply as the Federal Reserve boosts interest rates in an attempt to reduce inflation. Even so, monthly payrolls have grown an average of 438,000 from January through August, nearly three times their 2019 prepandemic pace.</p> <p>Many employers say they continue to struggle with large staffing shortages that built up during the pandemic and are reluctant to cut head count. In many cases, they are still hiring.</p> <p>"I don't think we'll see mass layoffs," said James Knightley, chief international economist at ING. "We are going to see companies prefer to hoard their labor rather than do a quick fire and then rehire because the challenges of hiring right now are incredibly intense."</p> <p>In Eau Claire, Wis., Jim Fey normally buys five to eight new buses each year for his privately owned school bus service. He doesn't plan to purchase any in 2023 because high inflation and interest rates have put the price of a bus out of reach. He worries about a recession. "There's going to be a lot of hurt," he said.</p>

Yet Mr. Fey is looking to add about 15 more school bus drivers to his staff of roughly 185. He and some of his office employees have had to drive routes since the start of this school year due to a shortage. “I can’t have my office staff out driving every single day,” he said.

Some economists say the scars of the past year’s shortages—including the huge expenses of hiring and recruiting, combined with high employee turnover—could leave companies more hesitant to lay off workers if the economy falls into a mild recession. They contend that companies never fully met their hiring needs during the recovery and that businesses will likely pull openings, which are at historic highs, before they resort to cutting jobs.

“You can’t lay off what you didn’t hire,” said Ron Hetrick, senior economist at Lightcast, a labor-market analytics firm. There are “a number of industries out there that are like, ‘We’re still waiting to hire. We never even got to enjoy the party when it started.’ ”

Some large companies, including Goldman Sachs Group Inc., Wayfair Inc. and Snap Inc., have recently announced or signaled layoffs, but they are outnumbered by companies saying that labor shortages are crimping sales and production. Domino’s Pizza Inc. said same-store sales declined in the second quarter from a year earlier in part due to staffing shortages, which left some of the companies’ locations operating on shortened hours. Layoffs and other involuntary discharges, at 1.4 million in July, were about 20% below their average monthly level in 2019, when GDP was growing more quickly.

Though openings still far exceed job seekers, the pace of hiring is likely to ease. Federal Reserve Chairman Jerome Powell has said that the Fed’s moves to slow the economy enough to bring down inflation will inevitably mean some softening in the labor market.

At their meeting last week, Fed officials projected the unemployment rate would rise to 4.4% in the fourth quarter of next year, from 3.7% in August. The only times the rate has increased that much is in or around recessions—but it would be relatively small by historical standards. In post-World War II recessions, the unemployment rate rose an average of 3.8 percentage points, with a range of 1.5 points in 1980 to 11.2 points when Covid-19 hit in 2020.

Amy Crews Cutts, chief economist at AC Cutts & Associates LLC, forecasts a sharper rise in unemployment. She expects the jobless rate to exceed 5% by the end of next year. The Fed’s aggressive interest rate increases are likely to hurt demand and employment, starting with the housing market, she said.

Over the past seven decades, payrolls and economic output have typically fallen within two quarters of the start of a recession.

The 1973-75 recession was a notable exception. At the time, inflation was rising swiftly amid an oil-price shock, provoking the Fed to raise interest rates. The recession began in November 1973 as output declined, but employment kept growing and then held steady for a total of about a year. The job market eventually buckled, with payrolls declining by about 2.5% between October 1974 and the spring of 1975.

Today’s unusual labor landscape can in part be traced to decisions made at the start of the pandemic. Economists Robert J. Gordon and Hassan Sayed found that companies in sectors like construction, utilities and mining laid off too many workers during the 2020 lockdowns. With employment falling faster than sales, productivity—output per hour—jumped.

As the economy reopened, the reverse occurred. Hiring outpaced sales, and productivity fell. That dynamic became especially acute this year. U.S. nonfarm labor productivity fell at a seasonally adjusted annual rate of 4.1% in the second quarter from the prior quarter, the Labor Department said. It followed a drop of 7.4% in the first quarter, the sharpest fall in more than 74 years.

Arlington, Va.-based aerospace and defense conglomerate Raytheon Technologies Corp. lowered its sales forecasts for the year due to supply-chain and labor constraints that slowed production. Workers in its supply chain have been slow to come back after layoffs early in the pandemic.

“Inflation is a challenge, but we can measure it. We can work to overcome it. Not having enough people in the supply chain—that has proven to be much more difficult,” chief executive Greg Hayes told analysts this summer. “The only thing that’s going to solve labor availability, I hate to say this, is a slowdown in the economy because right now, there just simply aren’t enough people in the workforce for all of our suppliers.”

Employers are also coping with turnover. Nonfarm payrolls, which fell by nearly 22 million at the beginning of the pandemic, surpassed their prepandemic peak in August. That means monthly job growth is set to fade, according to economists. But even employers not seeking to raise head count have to keep hiring to fill vacancies caused by historically high rates of turnover. In July, 2.7% of workers quit their jobs, up from 2.3% in February 2020, when the jobless rate matched a half-century low.

Sales at beer distributor Dan Henry Distributing Company are down from 2021, but high attrition means the Lansing, Mich., company is employing between eight and 12 more people than it would normally need, said Kate Henry, co-owner of the 105-person company.

About half of new hires never show up, and of those that do, many disappear after a few hours, she said. Others last just days or weeks before quitting.

“We just keep hiring and replacing, hiring and replacing—wash, rinse, repeat,” said Ms. Henry. “Efficiency goes to hell when you continuously hire since the person who is training them isn’t going at their normal pace because they’re stopping to explain things,” she said. Many new hires leave before that training yields return, she added.

The company is spending the equivalent of a full-time employee’s salary on online ads for merchandising jobs, which require workers to lift 25 to 50 pounds filling store shelves and coolers with beer.

Construction industry layoffs are still below prepandemic levels, though new home sales have fallen sharply this year and housing starts have dropped because of higher mortgage rates. Residential builders are struggling with the legacy of job cuts undertaken during the housing crisis of 2007-09, with employment in residential construction 12% below its 2006 peak.

New home inquiries and land sales to home buyers have slowed since this summer as prospective buyers face higher interest rates and an uncertain economic climate, said Eugene Graf, who owns a land development and custom home-building company in Bozeman, Mont.

Mr. Graf said his bigger concern is labor. “The staffing shortages are causing the most challenges right now,” he said. “We can plan for a slowdown. We can understand what each project in the future is going to take, but today’s staffing shortage is stressing everybody out.”

To retain workers, Mr. Graf has raised wages by about 15% over the past year for his superintendents who oversee projects, the biggest in-house pay bump he’s ever made.

Many of Mr. Graf’s subcontractors are short of workers. A painting firm that normally runs with about 100 employees is down to 80. An electrical contractor extended job offers to three workers and only one of them showed up to the job site on a recent Monday morning. A granite installer lost about 15 employees because they couldn’t afford to stay in the area amid fast-rising housing costs.

“We’d be hesitant to lay anybody off just because we still need to perform the contracts we have,” Mr. Graf said.

Businesses run the risk of hiring too many workers. Some large companies that bulked up their workforces in recent years are now seeking to downsize some of their operations. Amazon.com Inc. said it is overstaffed in its warehouses. Facebook parent Meta Platforms Inc. said it would sharply slow its hiring after more than doubling the size of its workforce since 2018.

The tight labor market is a boon to workers. Job switchers reaped annual pay increases of 8.4% in August, averaged over three months, up from a 5.8% annual rise at the start of this year, according to the Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta.

For much of last year, Angela Oehman was picking up Instacart and Uber gigs to supplement her income at a job selling safety-related products, including manuals and training. This spring, after searching on job site Indeed.com, she landed a new role as a safety officer overseeing concrete-construction projects in Arizona.

Depending on her hours, Ms. Oehman, 45 years old, can make about \$70,000 annually, up from roughly \$50,000 in her previous job. That's given her a peace of mind about supporting herself and her daughter, a high-school senior. "I don't worry about: How am I going to pay for her ring? How am I going to pay for her cap and gown? What about her senior trip?" she said. "I've been able to save. Before, I couldn't save."

Still, she's concerned about the economy, particularly given volatile gas prices and big cost increases for things like food and her modular home's rental lot. "You can't keep raising prices on us and expect us to live," she said.

Brisk wage gains ultimately might not last because they're being fueled by tight labor markets. The Federal Reserve worries such high wages will keep inflation pressures elevated.

Laurence Ball, an economics professor at Johns Hopkins University, expects the interest-rate increases to broadly hurt the labor market and economy in 2023, after the Fed's initial rate increase in the spring.

William Spriggs, chief economist with the AFL-CIO, said the Fed's interest-rate increases have already started to hurt parts of the labor market. The unemployment rate for Black workers has risen recently while their labor-force participation has declined. Further, the jobless rate increased in August among Hispanic workers, who are vulnerable to the construction slowdown, Mr. Spriggs said in a September panel on the employment outlook hosted by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development.

Mr. Spriggs expects the Fed's continued rate increases will inflict further damage, undoing the widespread labor-market gains that stemmed from a historically fast rebound.

"This was the strongest recovery we've ever had," Mr. Spriggs said. "The labor market is healthy, but what the Fed is doing right now is exceedingly dangerous."

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HEADLINE	09/30 China warning sign: service sector slows
SOURCE	https://www.wsj.com/articles/chinas-service-sector-slows-in-latest-economic-warning-sign-11664524188?mod=hp_lead_pos6
GIST	<p>HONG KONG—Chinese economic activity remained feeble in September, with the services sector slipping into contraction, offering fresh evidence of the damage that Beijing's Covid-prevention measures and a deepening real estate slide are inflicting on the country's economy.</p> <p>Activity in the service sector, which includes the retail, catering and transport industries, were hammered as authorities across China tightened Covid-19 restrictions ahead of a key political gathering in October.</p> <p>A subindex measuring the services sector fell to 48.9 in September from 51.9 the previous month, China's National Bureau of Statistics reported Friday. The poor performance in the services sector dragged the</p>

broader official nonmanufacturing purchasing managers index down to 50.6 in September, from 52.6. A reading below 50 indicates contraction.

Weakening momentum in the services sector underscores the limits to Beijing's campaign to spur domestic demand as youth unemployment hovers near historic levels, income growth stalls and the real-estate market remains depressed.

Moreover, economists warn that China's strict Covid-19 curbs, which many expect to remain in place through the rest of the year, are likely to keep a lid on any potential rebound.

As of Friday, cities under some form of Covid restrictions accounted for 25% of gross domestic product, down from 28% a week earlier, according to Goldman Sachs. The investment bank, along with many of its peers, doesn't expect China to begin easing Covid restrictions until toward the middle of 2023.

Spending during a coming weeklong national holiday that begins on Saturday, typically one of the busiest travel seasons of the year, is expected to pale in comparison with the year-earlier level, analysts say, pointing to guidance from public health officials across China urging the public to avoid moving around and reduce infection risks.

"We think the economy will continue to struggle over the coming months," Zichun Huang, an economist at Capital Economics, told clients in a note Friday.

The World Bank, along with many investment banks, have slashed their China growth forecasts this year to 3% or lower—a far cry from Beijing's official target of about 5.5%. Research firms now anticipate China's economy to expand by around 4.5% next year, a comedown from earlier forecasts of growth of 5% or higher.

The slump in service-sector activity overshadowed a surprise improvement in factory activity, which returned to expansionary territory in September as the impact of a summer power crunch caused by drought and a heat wave dissipated—and as government support measures kicked in.

The official manufacturing purchasing managers index ticked up to 50.1 in September from 49.4 the previous month, according to official data. The reading followed two consecutive months of contraction. Economists polled by the Journal had expected a reading of 49.8.

Surprising as the outcome was, many economists aren't holding out hope for a sustained improvement, given cooling global demand for Chinese-made goods as fears of a global recession rise.

Separate data released on Friday by Caixin Media Co. and S&P Global, focused on smaller-scale and private-sector manufacturers, pointed to weaker factory activity as new orders contracted for a second straight month. The China Caixin manufacturing purchasing managers index fell to 48.1 in September from 49.5 a month earlier.

Last month, China's statistics bureau reported a sharp pullback in the export growth rate, to 7.1% in August from a year earlier, the weakest year-over-year gain in four months, as global demand receded and China's factories wrestled with Covid-related disruptions.

A subindex of the official manufacturing PMI tracking new export orders showed overseas demand continuing to weaken in September. The subindex slipped to 47, the lowest level in four months, the data showed.

During the first 10 days of September, cargo and container throughput for foreign trade at China's major ports contracted by around 15% when compared with a year earlier, according to economists at Nomura.

A rapid deceleration in export growth could be a "real game-changer" for Beijing policy makers, given the export sector's status as a central pillar of economic growth since the pandemic first exploded nearly three

	<p>years ago, Nomura wrote in a report last week. It predicted that a rapid deterioration in exports would compel Beijing to reconsider its Covid-prevention and property-sector policies, or risk letting the economy slip into recession.</p> <p>So far, the government's measures to support the economy have been tepid and piecemeal, economists say—a contrast to their response during earlier slowdowns. As the outlook worsened during the summer, Beijing lowered interest rates, extended fresh credit to policy banks and cut taxes for small businesses, but otherwise held off on sweeping fiscal stimulus measures aimed at juicing the economy.</p> <p>On Thursday, China's central bank said it would allow some cities that are suffering from falling home prices to further slash mortgage rates for first-time home buyers, adding to previous administrative measures aimed at stabilizing the faltering market.</p> <p>Rosalea Yao, an analyst at Gavekal Dragonomics, said Thursday that recent property easing policies didn't seem to be making much difference, noting that sales remained sluggish in large cities even after the rollout of looser measures.</p> <p>"There is no indication the new policies are having a significant impact on sales," she told clients in a note.</p>
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HEADLINE	09/29 France: thousands take to streets in protest
SOURCE	https://www.wsj.com/articles/thousands-protest-in-france-against-inflation-macrons-pension-plan-11664464670?mod=lead_feature_below_a_pos1
GIST	<p>PARIS—Thousands of people took to the streets in France on Thursday to demand higher wages to cope with inflation and to protest President Emmanuel Macron's plan to raise the country's retirement age.</p> <p>Striking teachers, students and railway workers joined peaceful protests in dozens of cities across the country, snarling traffic and forcing many schools to shut down. The Eiffel Tower remained closed. The street demonstrations are a sign of the potential turmoil European leaders face as the war in Ukraine continues with no end in sight. Moscow has choked supplies of Russian gas to the continent, hammering businesses and stoking fuel prices.</p> <p>Mr. Macron's government has spent more than 40 billion euros, equivalent to \$38.9 billion, on measures to limit increases in the price of fuel, gas and electricity. They include a cap on electricity and natural-gas prices, as well as a rebate on fuel.</p> <p>The measures have helped inflation in France to remain lower than in the U.S. and most other European countries. Still, rising food prices are taking a heavy toll on France's low-income families. Inflation stood at 6.6% in August, according to French statistics agency Insee.</p> <p>Despite the inflationary pressure, Mr. Macron is moving ahead with a plan to overhaul the country's pension system, raising the retirement age and angering the country's powerful unions.</p> <p>After losing his majority in Parliament in June, Mr. Macron pledged to turn the page on his first term, in which he wielded authority without building political consensus, and lead the country with a new method. Opposition and union leaders now say the president isn't keeping his word.</p> <p>"He pretends to listen. In reality he does what he wants," Philippe Martinez, leader of the CGT, one of France's largest unions, said in a recent interview.</p> <p>Many French companies have handed out tax-free bonuses to their employees this year, taking advantage of a new measure implemented by Mr. Macron's government to improve purchasing power.</p>

French luxury company [LVMH Moët Hennessy Louis Vuitton](#) SE said Thursday that it would give bonuses ranging from €1,000 to €1,500 to its 27,000 employees in France.

But few companies have raised salaries to match inflation.

“Increase our salaries, not the age of retirement,” said Ludovic Le Ny, a 36-year-old metro conductor, who took part in protests in Paris. Several thousand people marched through the streets of the French capital and gathered on the Bastille square, a symbol of France’s revolution.

Mr. Macron has long pushed for an overhaul of the country’s pension system. In 2019, the leader proposed to consolidate France’s 42 pension plans, which vary widely in retirement age and income, into one universal system, and introduce bonuses and penalties to encourage people to work until age 64. The move triggered the longest transport strike in France’s history, paralyzing the country for weeks.

Mr. Macron was forced to shelve his plans as the country went into lockdown because of the Covid-19 pandemic. But he pledged again to raise the age of retirement from 62 to 64 or 65 years old during his re-election campaign, saying it was the only way to preserve France’s social model without raising taxes or increasing the country’s debt.

“I am convinced that it is a necessity,” Mr. Macron said recently, speaking on TV.

France’s pensions advisory council, which oversees the middle- and long-term stability of the pension system, said government spending on pensions as currently planned threatened France’s deficit-reduction targets. Mr. Macron’s government aims to reduce the public-sector budget deficit to below a European Union ceiling of 3% of economic output in 2027 from 5% this year.

Earlier this month, Mr. Macron said he was considering different ways to raise the country’s retirement age, including invoking Article 49 of the constitution, which allows the government to override a vote in Parliament. The article allows lawmakers to retaliate with a no-confidence motion that, if successful, forces the government to resign.

Laurent Berger, the general secretary of the CFDT, France’s largest union, said raising the age of retirement with limited debate risked sparking a crisis.

“Don’t play with matches next to gas,” Mr. Berger said in a recent interview.

On Thursday, Labor Minister Olivier Dussopt said the government would draft legislation by Christmas, and talks with political parties and unions would start next week.

A recent Elabe poll of 1,002 people showed that 79% of French people are against raising the current age of retirement. More than half said the government should take the time to discuss and debate any pension overhaul, according to the poll.

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HEADLINE	09/29 NY bans sale gas-power vehicles by 2035
SOURCE	https://www.wsj.com/articles/new-york-state-to-ban-sale-of-gasoline-powered-vehicles-by-2035-11664487387?mod=hp_listb_pos2
GIST	<p>New York state is banning the sale of new gasoline-powered vehicles by 2035, in a move officials say is aimed at cutting down on greenhouse gas emissions and getting more electric vehicles on the road.</p> <p>Gov. Kathy Hochul, a Democrat, said Thursday that she was directing the state’s Department of Environmental Conservation to implement the regulations. Those regulations will be filed by the end of the year, a spokeswoman for the governor said.</p>

Ms. Hochul, who first announced the goal last year, said the state couldn't move forward until California officially approved its own regulations—which it did last month, [banning the sale of new gasoline-powered cars and trucks](#) by 2035.

“We had to wait for California to take a step because there’s some federal requirement California had to go first,” she said at a press conference Thursday.

The Clean Air Act of 1970 granted California the ability to set its own environmental rules, and other states can choose to adopt them.

Like California, New York’s rules would apply to all new cars, pickup trucks and SUVs, Ms. Hochul said. The regulations would establish annual targets for the share of zero-emission vehicles auto makers must sell in the state, starting at 35% in 2026, ramping up to 68% by 2030, and 100% by 2035. Many car makers have already said they are [working toward an eventual phaseout](#) of gas-powered vehicles.

Ms. Hochul said New York towns and cities can apply for grants to help them buy zero-emission vehicles for their fleets, as well as help them build electric-vehicle charging stations.

The governor said \$175 million in federal funds from the [2021 Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act](#) would go toward building electric-vehicle charging stations.

Nationally, President Biden has set a voluntary target for half of U.S. auto sales [to be zero-emission by 2030](#).

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HEADLINE	09/29 Seattle encampment fires up 15% in 2022
SOURCE	https://mynorthwest.com/3654793/encampment-fires-up-15-in-2022-its-tough-every-time-ship-canal-bridge/
GIST	<p>The Seattle Fire Department has responded to 1,133 fires at encampments so far in 2022, not including Wednesday’s fire that sent smoke by drivers from under the north end of the Ship Canal Bridge.</p> <p>SFD was able to provide numbers from Jan. 1 to Sept. 25, with a few days of delay in reporting. In the same time frame from 2021, the department responded to 15% fewer fire calls at encampments – 981.</p> <p>On Wednesday, drivers on the Ship Canal Bridge called 911 to report smoke appearing on the road. Fire officials said they arrived to find billowing, acrid smoke from the encampment, which had multiple propane tanks scattered within its bounds. They said the situation called for extra precautions.</p> <p>After hearing loud popping noises coming from the flames, firefighters called in extra resources, but the 75-by-75-foot fire was put out within 10 minutes. Burned lithium batteries were found among the debris.</p> <p>The fire slowed traffic on the bridge, but it was enough time for William Hughes to come home and watch through the holes of a wire fence as responders doused the embers around what was his tent.</p> <p>“I just saw the flames, and all of a sudden, there were all these people running out,” he said.</p> <p>“These things burn fast,” he added, explaining how flammable the tents are. Hughes said his tent had propane tanks for cooking and other food supplies for the whole encampment.</p> <p>“All of that stuff was in there,” Hughes said. “So that stuff started burning and popping, and when that happens, you have to just get away because you don’t know which direction it’s going to shoot.”</p> <p>Hughes told KIRO Newsradio he lost nearly everything he had.</p> <p>“Now, for me, I’ve got to figure out where’s dinner tonight,” he said. “All of my food just burnt up.”</p>

But this isn't a new disaster for Hughes, who said he's gone through this three times now.

"They're always scary, but this is probably the biggest one for me," he said. "The hardest part is, you don't know what's going to happen."

Washington State Department of Transportation said it is inspecting the bridge, but these kinds of fires typically do not leave lasting damage to the infrastructure.

With Gov. Jay Inslee placing an emphasis on clearing out encampments along the I-5 corridor and moving people into transitional housing, WSDOT requires four items of business before a site can be cleared: Offering a shelter and services to people living there; storage of their belongings; safety and security for people on-site and work crews; and restoration and cleanup of the property.

"WSDOT's responsibility and expertise is limited to the last action, the clean up of right of way once the people living there have moved to housing or shelter," said WSDOT's spokesperson James Poling. "This process is a joint effort with several state agencies and local jurisdictions."

Poling also stated that encampments on state rights-of-way are a complex issue, requiring a solution that covers housing and shelter availability along with sufficient time for effective joint-effort outreach with several state agencies and local jurisdictions.

"I know they give housing for people who have (been through) a sweep, but I don't know if this falls under the same category," Hughes said.

KIRO Newsradio has reached out to the City of Seattle for clarification on what is being done for those living under the Ship Canal Bridge.

While clarifying that the year-long numbers included reports of illegal burning — which can include callers reporting campfires on or near protected ground — SFD said it was difficult to pinpoint the most common cause. Many cases have been labeled as "accidental" or "undetermined," according to SFD.

Hughes said in his experience with fires, someone trying to keep warm has often fallen asleep next to an open flame.

But the cause of Wednesday's fire is still under determination as of Thursday afternoon.

When asked what he will do now, Hughes said he wasn't sure.

"It's tough," he said. "Every time."

KIRO Newsradio has reached back out to Hughes to confirm if he has received assistance.

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HEADLINE	09/29 Gas prices spike 10-cents overnight
SOURCE	https://mynorthwest.com/3654356/with-gas-prices-back-on-the-rise-seattleites-get-creative-to-avoid-frequent-trips-at-the-pump/
GIST	<p>After seeing "lower" gas prices over the summer — though still much higher than Pacific Northwest residents are used to — those prices are creeping back up again, increasing by an average of 50 cents in Washington just over the past week.</p> <p>Just last night, gas prices went up 10 cents.</p> <p>The increase has had Seattlites feeling the pressure on their finances. KIRO Newsradio caught up with some drivers at a gas station in Kirkland, where fuel currently costs \$5.50 per gallon.</p>

“It went up quite a bit,” said one woman who was looking at an \$80 gas bill. “It used to be down to ‘\$71,’ and I say that in air quotes, even though it really used to be ‘\$58.”

[According to AAA](#), the average price for a gallon of regular gasoline in this state a week ago was \$4.62. By Monday, a gallon of regular cost \$4.92. Then overnight, it climbed to more than \$5 a gallon once again.

Drivers who spoke with KIRO Newsradio were paying anywhere from \$75 to \$150 to fill up their trucks and SUVs. They reported coming up with a variety of solutions, such as working from home more, carpooling, and trying to combine trips to save money. They also are using tricks like only getting the bare minimum at a more expensive station along their route, and then driving to another station later that is cheaper to fill up the rest of their tank.

With the war in Ukraine, Hurricane Ian in Florida, and the ever-rising inflation that has been hurting people’s wallets, some are worried that prices will continue to increase.

“Oil companies raise prices when literally anything happens, especially when areas like Florida see these huge impacts,” one man commented skeptically.

[KIRO 7](#) spoke to Seattle University marketing professor Mathew Isaac about the sharp rise and if we could expect the trend to continue.

“The next couple of weeks, we might see some jumps or some increases,” Issac said. “But I don’t expect it to go up to the levels we were seeing last year.”

Washington holds the fifth-highest average for gas prices among states, with only Nevada (\$5.134), Hawaii (\$5.148), Oregon (\$5.223), and California (\$6.022) coming in higher, according to [GasBuddy](#).

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HEADLINE	09/30 Europe responds to Russia ‘energy war’
SOURCE	https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2022/09/30/germany-france-uk-energy-crisis-response/
GIST	<p>PARIS — Germany on Thursday announced an up to \$194 billion program to tackle rising energy prices, seeking to shield consumers and companies from some of the worst fallout as temperatures across Europe are starting to drop.</p> <p>German Finance Minister Christian Lindner said the planned emergency intervention is an “answer to Putin,” whom he accused of waging an “energy war” against Europe.</p> <p>But the German announcement on Thursday also underlined just how divided Europe’s response to rising energy prices has been. E.U. energy ministers were expected to meet in Brussels on Friday to discuss joint measures, including a possible gas price cap and levies on excess profits of energy produces. Some member states, notably France, have had extensive price caps in place for much of the year. Germany, which heavily relied on Russian gas prior to the invasion of Ukraine, is only now taking comparable action.</p> <p>Even though key details about Germany’s plan remained unclear, German officials were clear on what they don’t want them to look like.</p> <p>“We are expressly not following the U.K.’s example down a path to an expansionary fiscal policy,” Lindner said.</p> <p>New British Prime Minister Liz Truss caused a financial market revolt earlier this week after her government proposed using borrowed money to pay for tax cuts while spending heavily to insulate consumers from soaring energy bills. In response, the British pound fell to an all-time low against the U.S. dollar.</p>

How are France and Germany doing it?

The French government [has required](#) its majority state-owned energy company to sell power at an artificially low price this year, but also intervened quickly to impose price caps.

The swift response was likely rooted at least partly in memories from the early stages of President Emmanuel Macron's first term as president. Protests over environmental-linked fuel taxes in 2018 and 2019 quickly swelled in size, capturing broader concerns over social inequality, and triggering the Yellow Vest movement that later turned increasingly violent.

As the country prepared for the presidential election this April, Macron's government capped the increase in electricity prices at 4 percent, and froze natural gas prices at fall 2021 levels — and kept them there after the election.

Earlier this month, French Prime Minister Élisabeth Borne said electricity and natural gas price increases would be capped at 15 percent in 2023, and [12 million low-income households](#) will be eligible for one-off payments of up to around \$200.

"This will prevent real incomes in France from falling as far as in neighbouring economies, but at the expense of a bigger budget deficit," the Capital Economics consultancy added in a recent analysis.

Overall, the price caps are expected to cost around [\\$44 billion](#), and France expects to borrow a record sum — around [\\$260 billion](#) — to finance its expanding budget next year.

But future spending could end up being even higher in neighboring Germany, Europe's biggest economy, which relied more on Russian natural gas than most other E.U. countries.

Following the nationalization of gas importer Uniper earlier in September, the government called off a gas levy that was due to kick in Oct. 1. Instead, it is now expected to cover the cost of a price cap on gas and electricity that could bear some resemblance of the French approach. Private households, as well as small and medium-sized businesses, would receive a basic amount of electricity at a subsidized rate.

However, anything above that basic amount, consumers would have to purchase at the current market price. Alongside efforts to soften the financial impact of rising energy prices, Germany is keen to maintain an incentive among households and businesses to reduce energy consumption.

"The need to save energy remains unchanged," German Energy and Economy Minister Robert Habeck said Thursday on announcing the latest support package.

German officials have called on the public to use less energy by washing clothes at 86 Fahrenheit (30C), using more energy-efficient light bulbs and heating their homes at around 62F (17C). Shorter and cooler showers have also been encouraged. Monuments, public buildings and shop windows nationwide have no longer been lit up at night.

Why was the British energy plan so disruptive?

Britain too plans to borrow heavily to shield its consumers, but it is doing so while dramatically slashing taxes, which has sent investors into a panic and shocked the currency.

"What France and Germany have approved is, on the whole, going to be more market friendly," said Andrew Kenningham, Chief Europe Economist at Capital Economics, a consultancy firm.

Britain already has some of Europe's highest energy prices and so the British government has spent more than most to deal with the new surge. Over the past year, Britain spent 6.5 percent of its GDP to shield companies and individuals from the energy crisis — far more than most E.U. nations, according to Brussels-based economic [policy think tank Bruegel](#).

Within days of coming into office earlier this month, Truss announced a package of measures, including a lower-than-anticipated cap on energy bills until 2024.

Whereas average British annual prices per household were previously expected [to rise to around \\$3,900](#) — potentially throwing millions into financial difficulty — the government intervention will now likely keep annual prices around \$2,800, according to the Energy Saving Trust, an NGO.

But the tax cuts her government has proposed have prompted an unusual warning from the IMF of an increase in inequality, compounding concerns over Britain's ability to confront this winter's energy crisis without a wave of public anger.

The pound's plunging value will also make it more expensive for Britain to import from abroad, including energy.

What about Europe's energy infrastructure?

The rising prices have reawakened a number of parallel debates over European energy infrastructure and supplies.

In Germany, Economy Minister Habeck — a member of the Green Party — said this week that the country would likely not take all of its remaining nuclear power plants off the electricity grid by the end of this year as originally planned, drawing fierce criticism from within his party.

Germany's decision in 2011 to shut down all reactors by 2022 had followed decades of Green Party pressure to abandon nuclear energy.

Habeck argues that the extension is only temporary — only two plants may continue to operate until April next year — and that it is necessary because around half of all French nuclear plants are currently [under maintenance](#).

France has also been under pressure from the German, Spanish and Portuguese governments to approve a natural gas pipeline project between Spain and France via the Pyrenees.

French officials have argued that existing pipelines between the two countries already have enough capacity, and a new pipeline would take too long to build. "I do not understand why we would jump around like Pyrenees goats on this topic," Macron recently told reporters, [according to Reuters](#).

But Spanish and Portuguese pipeline advocates argue that France is trying to put its own energy producers at an advantage by limiting the amount of gas Spain and Portugal can send to central Europe.

In Britain, the government last week lifted [a ban on fracking](#), the environmentally fraught process of extracting shale gas, overturning an earlier decision that was made amid concerns over earth tremors.

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HEADLINE	09/29 Seattle schools face \$190M budget gap
SOURCE	https://crosscut.com/news/2022/09/how-will-seattle-public-schools-pay-new-teacher-contract
GIST	<p>Seattle Public Schools will need to close a nearly \$190 million budget gap over the next few years to pay for its new three-year agreement with its educators' union.</p> <p>The Seattle Public School Board on Wednesday unanimously approved the contract that was ratified by the Seattle Education Association last week. Now they just need to figure out where to get the money.</p> <p>After the Seattle Education Association strike that delayed the fall opening of Seattle Public Schools for a week, both the district and the union have voted on an agreement that will require an additional \$231 million in the district's operating funds over the three-year life of the contract.</p>

The additional staff and salary increases will add to existing budget shortfalls in the last two years of the contract. The district, which has a \$1.14 billion general fund, created a budget in anticipation of the contract, district officials said Wednesday, resulting in a net difference of an additional \$12 million to district expenditures in the current year, \$33 million in the 2023-24 year, and \$48 million in the 2024-25 year.

However, [district officials told the board](#) earlier this month that those costs added to existing shortfalls means that the district will face possible gaps of \$47.5 million in 2023-24 and \$139 million in 2024-25.

The exact figures will depend on student enrollment, which, if it continues to decline, could further erode the district's income because the state of Washington distributes some education funding with a per-student formula.

"Many things can be true at the same time," said school board President Brandon Hersey after the vote. "Do our educators deserve to have a living wage and to be able to afford to live in the city where they teach? Hell, yes. Do we currently know the best strategies to figure out how to accommodate that within our subsequent budgets? We made it very clear that the answer to that question is no."

"I believe that we reached a good collective bargaining agreement and that it comes with a price with extraordinary deficits," said school board member Leslie Harris. "The Legislature has not in any way, shape or form done right by the school districts, school districts staffs, and most importantly the students in Washington state public schools K-12. Frankly I don't see that changing anytime soon unless we get together and leverage. These are very dark days ahead, and we need to be very very clear on that."

Seattle Public Schools has an operating-fund budget this year of about [\\$1.14 billion](#), paid for by state and federal funding and local taxes. About 59.3% of it comes from state tax dollars, some of which is earmarked for programs such as special education, English Language Learners and buses. About 15.9% of the money comes from local taxes and about 6.7% comes from federal funding.

Officials say the district will rely on federal pandemic relief ESSER funds and its Economic Stabilization funding, [general fund money that the Seattle district sets in reserve](#) to keep some programs going during budget shortfalls, to cover the increased costs in the current school year and partially cover the second year. But how the district will cover the shortfall for the second and third years of the contract is still up in the air.

The Seattle Education Association – the union that covers more than 6,000 employees, including teachers, instructional aides, librarians and some office staff – called for a greater cost-of-living adjustment for educators, as well as language outlining how the district will manage the shift to inclusion of special education and English Language Learners in the general classroom.

The staff covered by the union – which is more than 75% of all district employees – will get a 7% raise the first year, followed by 4% in 2023-24 and 3% in 2024-25, according to information released by Seattle Public Schools. The state budget approved by the Legislature earlier this year set aside enough money to give these educators a 5.5% raise this next school year. Anything above that state allocation is on local districts.

The Seattle contract also calls for increased staffing of social workers, nurses and mental health counselors, as well as of speech language specialists.

About 4,000 out of 6,000 union members voted on the contract, which was approved by about 71% of teachers and other certificated staff, 66% of instructional aides and other paraprofessionals, and 82% of office professionals, according to the Seattle Education Association.

Seattle is not the only district facing funding shortages because of rising costs. The Olympia School District faces a [\\$17.5 million shortfall](#) in next year's budget, after approving an education staff salary increase that adds up to 18% over three years, according to The Olympian.

Olympia School District Budget Director Jennifer Priddy told Crosscut that the district will be able to analyze the 2023-24 budget after this year's enrollment is finalized in October. "While a projected budget shortfall is a cause for concern, there are many moving parts to the outlook projection and we will proceed carefully as we begin a public conversation about budget priorities," Priddy said in an email.

The discussion of budget shortfalls for Seattle schools, as well as in other districts, will likely open the door this upcoming legislative session to questioning how the state is paying for public education.

At a meeting earlier this month, Seattle Public Schools board member Liza Rankin pointed out that the upcoming legislative session is a budget year, and called for the state to start paying for the school supports that teachers and parents have said help with classroom success. "So why don't we have counselors... Why doesn't every school have a nurse? It's because the state doesn't pay for it. And the state is how we were funded," she said.

The Washington Legislature allocates education dollars, which make up 53% of the state budget, using a so-called "prototypical school model." That model says every school will get a certain number of teachers and other support staff, including nurses and librarians and counselors, based on student population. A related salary schedule divides the state into cost-of-living regions. It's a complicated model that resulted from years of legal wrangling, including the 2012 *McCleary* decision.

Seattle Education Association President Jennifer Matter said in a press conference announcing the union's ratification of the contract that discussions for how to fund school supports should come up not only during contract negotiations, but on a broader and statewide level.

"We also have a broken, you know, K-12 prototypical model that doesn't fully fund for counselors, social workers, family support workers, those people who provide mental health support," she said.

Matter said that education advocates will have to return to the Legislature this year to push for those changes. "Yes, there were huge gains this past spring with our Legislature, but there's still more to do," she said.

Hersey also said that something needs to change with school funding.

"I know for a fact we are not the only ones in this situation," he said, "I think that it speaks volumes to the fact that the state currently does spend over 50% of its budget on K-12 education and that's clearly not enough."

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HEADLINE	09/29 Study: vaping, pot use rise among teens
SOURCE	https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2022/sep/29/study-vaping-pot-rise-among-teens-booze-and-cigare/
GIST	<p>Marijuana smoking and nicotine vaping are the substances of choice for today's adolescent users, with the rate of use for other substances continuing to decline, a new study says.</p> <p>The study, published on Sept. 20 in the journal <i>Substance Use and Misuse</i>, tracked the habits of over 500,000 American youths in grades 8, 10 and 12 over the course of 28 years, from 1998 to 2019.</p> <p>Alcohol and cigarettes are still the most used drugs, with 27% of respondents saying they had consumed alcohol in the last month, and 15% reporting smoking cigarettes in the last month.</p> <p>Where those rates have gradually declined, marijuana and nicotine vaping have filled the gap, with rates of use for both substances rising from 2017 to 2019. 13% of study respondents reported cannabis use in the last month.</p>

	<p>“Between 2017 and 2019, the percentage of U.S. teenagers who said they’d vaped nicotine in the past month rose from 7% to 17%, the investigators found. The relative increase in marijuana vaping was even greater, from just over 3% to almost 10%,” the study found, according to HealthDay.</p> <p>Whereas alcohol and cigarettes have been subject to decades of public health campaigns and new regulations governing their sale and advertising, marijuana use is up as many states have legalized the drug.</p> <p>“We’ve had some really impressive programs over the years targeting smoking and drinking specifically. I think less work has been done in this population for cannabis and vaping,” the study’s lead author Noah Kreski told USA Today.</p>
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HEADLINE	09/30 Day 219 of the Russia invasion
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/sep/30/russia-ukraine-war-latest-what-we-know-on-day-219-of-the-invasion
GIST	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A civilian convoy of cars heading to pick up relatives trying to flee Russian occupied territory was shelled near the city of Zaporizhzhia on Friday morning, killing 23 people. The governor of the region said another 28 people were injured as four missiles hit near a car parts market where the convoy had gathered. • Vladimir Putin has signed decrees paving the way for the occupied Ukrainian regions of Kherson and Zaporizhzhia to be formally annexed into Russia. On Friday the Russian president is expected to sign into law the annexations of four Ukrainian regions – Kherson, Zaporizhzhia, Donetsk and Luhansk – where Russia held fake referendums over the past week in order to claim a mandate for the territorial claims. Thursday night’s decrees, made public by the Kremlin, said Putin had recognised Kherson and Zaporizhzhia as independent territories. This is an intermediary step needed before Putin can go ahead with plans to declare on Friday that they are part of Russia. • The UN secretary general has warned Russia that annexing Ukrainian regions would mark a “dangerous escalation” that would jeopardise the prospects for peace in the region. António Guterres said any decision to proceed with the annexation of the Donetsk, Luhansk, Kherson and Zaporizhzhia regions “would have no legal value and deserves to be condemned”. • The Ukrainian president, Volodymyr Zelenskyy, warned of a “very harsh” response by Ukraine if Russia went ahead with the annexations. • There are indications that Russia might limit the movement of Ukrainians living in the occupied territories after it announces their annexation. Ukrainians have been told that from Saturday they will need to apply for a pass from the occupying authorities. This comes as the exiled Luhansk regional governor, Serhiy Haidai, said Russia had prevented about 1,000 Ukrainians from crossing the border into Latvia. • Russian forces may face “imminent defeat” in the key north-eastern city of Lyman as Ukrainian soldiers continue their counteroffensive in the east of the country, according to a US thinktank. The Institute for the Study of War, citing Russian reports, said the defeat would allow Ukrainian troops to “threaten Russian positions along the western Luhansk” region. Alexander Petrikin, the pro-Russian head of the city administration, admitted the situation had grown “difficult” for Russian forces trying to hold the territory. • Ukrainian forces have secured all of Kupiansk and driven Russian troops from their remaining positions on the east bank of the river that divides the north-eastern Ukrainian city. Most of Kupiansk, a strategic railway junction, was recaptured earlier this month as part of a counteroffensive by Ukrainian troops. AFP reported that those Russian troops who held out on the east bank of the Oskil river have been driven out. • Finland is closing its border to Russian tourists after Putin’s partial mobilisation order prompted large numbers of people to flee the country. From midnight Thursday Finnish time (9pm GMT), Russian tourists holding an EU Schengen visa will be turned away unless they have a family tie or a compelling reason to travel.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More than half of Russians felt fearful or anxious after Putin’s mobilisation announcement, according to a new poll. The poll by the independent Levada Centre showed 47% of respondents said they had felt anxiety, fear or dread after hearing that hundreds of thousands of soldiers would be drafted to fight in Ukraine. • Nato vowed a “determined response” to what it described as “deliberate, reckless and irresponsible acts of sabotage” after leaks were discovered in the two Nord Stream pipelines. Swedish authorities have reported a fourth leak on one of the pipelines. The two leaks in Swedish waters were close to each other. • Gas is likely to stop leaking from the damaged Nord Stream 1 pipeline on Monday, according to the pipeline’s operator. A spokesperson for Nord Stream AG said it was not possible to provide any forecasts for the pipeline’s future operation until the damage had been assessed. • The Kremlin has said incidents on the Nord Stream pipelines look like an “act of terrorism”. The Kremlin spokesperson, Dmitry Peskov, said a foreign state was probably responsible. Russia’s foreign ministry claimed the “incident on the Nord Stream occurred in a zone controlled by American intelligence”. • The European Commission president, Ursula von der Leyen, announced an eighth package of sanctions – including a draft sanctions law seen by the Guardian – designed to “make the Kremlin pay” for the escalation of the war against Ukraine. Hungary “cannot and will not support” energy sanctions in the package, said Gergely Gulyas, chief of staff to the prime minister, Viktor Orbán. An EU official said an agreement on the next sanctions package was expected before next week’s EU summit, or at least major parts of the package. • Russia is escalating its use of Iranian-supplied “kamikaze” drones in southern Ukraine, including against the southern port of Odesa and the nearby city of Mykolaiv. • Oleg Deripaska, one of Russia’s most powerful oligarchs, has been indicted by the US Department of Justice for criminal sanctions violations. Deripaska previously had deep links to British establishment figures.
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HEADLINE	09/29 Undersea pipelines in West are vulnerable
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/business/2022/sep/29/nord-stream-attacks-highlight-vulnerability-undersea-pipelines-west
GIST	<p>Nato countries are scrambling to improve security of highly vulnerable undersea pipelines and communications cables after the apparent Nord Stream attack in the Baltic Sea underlines the west’s extreme vulnerability.</p> <p>Four gas leaks on two Nord Stream pipelines have now been reported after blasts were detected on Monday. According to several reports citing European officials, Russian vessels were seen in the vicinity of the Nord Stream I and II pipelines where they were damaged, but an examination of the damage may not be possible for weeks for safety reasons, and no proof of Moscow’s involvement has been presented.</p> <p>Norway’s prime minister, Jonas Gahr Støre, ordered stepped-up military and police patrols at the country’s oil and gas rigs and pipelines after the explosions. On Monday, before the Nord Stream blasts, the Norwegian Petroleum Safety Authority had reported unidentified drones flying near Norwegian offshore oil and gas rigs. Støre described the drone activity as “abnormal”.</p> <p>Norway is Europe’s principal gas supplier and has nearly 9,000km of pipeline to patrol. Any interruption in its supply could trigger an immediate energy crisis and a rupture in active pipelines would lead to an ecological disaster. Oslo has asked for help from Nato allies in helping patrol its infrastructure.</p> <p>“The Norwegian response is understandable,” Britain’s first sea lord and chief of naval staff, Adm Sir Ben Key, said. “There is a vulnerability around anything that sits on the seabed, whether that’s gas pipelines, whether that’s data cables that places an obligation on organisations like the Royal Navy – but not just us – to have a means of monitoring and providing security around it.”</p>

Key, speaking on board the aircraft carrier HMS Queen Elizabeth during a visit to New York, said he could not go into detail as to what countermeasures the Royal Navy were taking, but added: "It's fair to say that we are keeping a close eye on where we think those most critical vulnerabilities are at the moment and how we better protect them."

Several European politicians have blamed Russia for the explosions but Key said there is no definitive evidence. "We have to be very careful about the language we choose about any sense at this stage of direct attribution because I don't think that that's all clear," he said.

The west is particularly vulnerable in its reliance on undersea cables that carry more than 90% of the world's internet traffic. If those cables were severed it would trigger a multifaceted crisis, affecting most aspects of modern life. Russia's communications infrastructure is more land-based.

"The world's information is reliant on those cables," Britain's chief of the defence staff, Adm Sir Tony Radakin, said. "This is very, very sensitive, but we have a variety of systems as to how we protect those networks, but we also recognise that these are areas where we need to do additional investment."

Radakin said the Royal Navy has commissioned a specialised vessel, the multi-role ocean surveillance ship, for patrolling and protecting underwater infrastructure using sensors and autonomous underwater drones. The Royal Navy hopes to buy two of the ships but they are not expected to enter service before 2024.

For several years, Russian submarines have been spotted loitering near critical cables and pipelines on the seabed, though western defence officials said there has been no sign of an increase in Russian underwater activity in recent months during the Ukraine war.

Russia has nuclear-powered mini-submarines capable of operating at depths of 1,000 metres, equipped with mechanical arms able to manipulate or cut cables. These mini-sub subs need to be transported to the vicinity by much bigger submarines, and the Russians have two modern classes of vessel capable of carrying and delivering them, the Podmoskovye and the Belgorod. Detecting an attack may involve being able to monitor these larger submarines.

"We keep a constant watch on movements out of Kaliningrad and the Kola peninsula," a Nordic military official said, referring to two centres of Russian naval activity. The official described them as "choke points", where Russian submarines would have to pass through a relatively narrow sea passage to reach the Baltic and North Atlantic.

"But it could also come from a trawler, which might have been at the location a month before any attack," the Nordic official said.

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HEADLINE	09/29 In Russia some flee, others head to war
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/sep/29/i-will-defend-the-country-while-some-russians-flee-draft-others-head-to-war
GIST	<p>When Ilya returned from work on Wednesday, his wife was waiting for him with his military draft papers. Ilya said he quickly packed his bags and departed the next morning for his local recruitment centre in Irkutsk, a city on Lake Baikal in Siberia.</p> <p>"When the motherland comes calling, you have to answer," the 27-year-old bus driver said in a brief phone interview from a training ground near the southern city of Rostov. "I decided that I am not going to dodge the draft and will defend the country."</p> <p>Vladimir Putin's mobilisation order has triggered a run for the borders by tens of thousands of men of fighting age who are unwilling to participate in Russia's unprovoked invasion of Ukraine.</p>

But standing in stark contrast to the mile-long lines to get out are videos of men across the country, to the applause of their wives and mothers, boarding buses that will take them to training centres, in what is likely to be a one-way journey for many.

The men are evidence of some public backing for the war in Ukraine and of the growing polarisation in the country, said Denis Volkov of the Levada Centre, an independent polling agency.

“The nation has split, and mobilisation has further exacerbated existing divisions,” Volkov said. “The western-oriented, more modern, urban segment of the population wants to leave and is against the draft. But there is still a large core of men that will not avoid the draft. They are often less educated, poorer and more reliant on the state.”

The Kremlin, seemingly aware of those divisions, has been eager to tap into more rural areas for its mobilisation drive, with authorities reportedly looking to keep recruitment “to a minimum” in regional capitals.

A poll published by Volkov’s Levada Centre on Thursday found that the proportion of Russians who “fully” or “somewhat” support what the Kremlin calls its “special military operation” has dropped since Putin ordered the mobilisation, but still stands at 72%. “Society consolidated when the war started, that will not change overnight,” Volkov said.

While some observers have questioned the logic of polling public opinion in a country where information about the war is carefully curated by state television and opposition is punishable with prison time, Volkov said he believed the results were credible.

He said a key source of support for the Russian military was the notion – hammered home daily on state television and held by many in the country – that Russia is engaged in a broader war with Nato and the United States.

Interviews and polls show that some Russians have also accepted the Kremlin’s unfounded claim that Russia is under siege from the west and had no choice but to invade Ukraine.

“My husband is fighting not only against Ukraine but also Nato. We don’t have many allies,” said Lyudmila, whose husband, Sergei, was mobilised this week.

Since the start of the mobilisation, Telegram groups have sprung up in which women share tips on how to stay in touch with their partners or sons. Lyudmila, who runs one of the groups, said: “I am proud of my husband. Russia is pinned against the wall and we have to fight back.”

For some men, a perceived inability to dodge the draft – an offence punishable by as much as 10 years in prison – has led them to reluctantly turn up at recruitment centres. “I don’t want to fight, but I can’t hide for ever, it is better to just face what is coming,” said Igor, from St Petersburg, who received his draft papers on Wednesday.

But despite many Russians’ continued support for Putin’s invasion, Levada’s poll found that 70% of respondents had reacted with “fear” “terror” and “shock” to the mobilisation orders. It also found that Putin’s approval ratings had dropped by six points, the biggest decrease since the start of the war, with only a quarter of men under the age of 24 in favour of continuing the fighting in Ukraine.

According to Andrei Kolesnikov, of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, a US thinktank, Levada’s latest numbers hint at growing anger over the war among many in Russia. “It’s just the beginning, discontent is slowly maturing,” he said.

The public’s anxiety over mobilisation is only likely to grow after the first videos emerged from training centres this week showing scores of men subjected to poor conditions as they wait to be sent to Ukraine.

	<p>In one video, a group of men are seen sleeping on the floor in overcrowded army barracks. In other footage, a recently mobilised unit appears to have been dropped off in an isolated field with no shelter or food rations. “There is fucking nothing here. Like a flock of sheep, we have to self-mobilise,” one of the men grumbles.</p> <p>There are also growing reports that newly mobilised men are tasked with buying their own equipment, ranging from bulletproof vests to sleeping mats and thermal underwear.</p> <p>“We spent over 30,000 rubles [£460], my monthly salary, to prepare him for the army,” said Tatyana, a school teacher from the Ural city of Chelyabinsk, whose husband has been mobilised.</p> <p>She said the lack of basic supplies in the army had shocked her, denting some of her previously held beliefs about the state of the country’s military and about the war. “How can they ask him to fight there when everything is such a mess?” she said. “The war should stop.”</p>
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HEADLINE	09/29 Russia escalates use of ‘kamikaze’ drones
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/sep/29/russia-escalating-use-of-iranian-kamikaze-drones-ukraine-reports-say
GIST	<p>Russia is escalating its use of Iranian-supplied “kamikaze” drones in southern Ukraine, including against the southern port of Odesa and the nearby city of Mykolaiv, amid estimates that hundreds of weapons may now have been deployed by the Kremlin in Crimea and other occupied areas of the south.</p> <p>The drones – also known as loitering munitions – have also been used against Ukrainian artillery positions in the country’s east, including in the Kharkiv region. Britain’s Ministry of Defence first noted the Russian use of the Iranian supplied weapons in mid-September.</p> <p>Able to remain airborne for several hours and circle over potential targets, the drones are designed to be flown into enemy troops, armour or buildings, exploding on impact – explaining their description as kamikaze drones.</p> <p>On Tuesday, Ukrainian armed forces said they had successfully shot down three more Iranian kamikaze drones that attacked Mykolaiv region.</p> <p>A day before Ukraine’s air force spokesperson Yuriy Ihnat suggested Iran may have supplied “several hundred” of the weapons to Russia.</p> <p>While drone warfare has become one of the defining features of the conflict in Ukraine, efforts to procure and deploy kamikaze drones have been stepped up by both sides in recent months.</p> <p>While much attention has focused on Ukraine’s highly successful use of drone warfare – not least that employing Turkish supplied Bayraktar TB2s – Russia has begun relying more heavily on kamikaze drones rather than missiles.</p> <p>In recent weeks Russian forces have used Iranian-made Shahed-136 unmanned aerial vehicles to hit the Odesa and Dnipro regions with Ukraine’s president, Volodymyr Zelenskiy, citing the supply of the drones to Russia as “a collaboration with evil” behind Ukraine’s recent downgrading of ties with Iran.</p> <p>Reports suggest that the kamikaze drones used in recent weeks have been launched from Russian-controlled areas including the Crimea and occupied Kherson.</p> <p>According to Ukrainian military sources some of the drones had been repainted in Russian colours. In one of his nightly addresses at the weekend Zelenskiy accused Iran of supplying the drones, a claim denied by Tehran, which has said it is neutral in the conflict.</p>

“Today the Russian army used Iranian drones for its strikes. The world will know about every instance of collaboration with evil, and it will have corresponding consequences,” Zelenskiy said, a few hours after Oleg Nikolenko, spokesperson for the Ukrainian foreign ministry, tweeted that the Iranian supplied drones had led to the revocation of the Iranian ambassador’s accreditation.

While at least one other kind of Iranian-supplied drone has been identified in Ukraine, the Shahed 136 – also known as the Heran 2 – has been used most frequently, already becoming familiar for its sound like a distant motorbike engine during its approach.

Usually launched in pairs, the 200kg drone – which is armed with a warhead, officially has claimed range of about 2,000km although realistically it is believed to be closer to several hundred with anecdotal evidence suggesting that Ukrainian forces have at times struggled to track the incoming drones.

In a recent interview Oleg Katkov, of Ukraine’s Defense Express, suggested the drones were probably relatively low-tech, assembled from parts that could be bought easily online and guided by a civilian GPS system, with their effectiveness coming from their use in swarms.

“Since this equipment is assembled from low-quality parts, the reliability will be low. That is why the tactics of using these UAVs [unmanned aerial vehicles] involves their use in a so-called swarm. In other words, five to six, or even more, kamikaze drones are launched at one target, assuming that a few of them will fulfil their task.”

Ukraine has also said Russian forces are using another larger and more sophisticated Iranian drone – the Mohajer-6 – which can also be used for reconnaissance flights or armed with munitions, which is also being flown out of Crimea.

Despite Tehran’s denials, there has been mounting evidence of its role in supplying weapons.

The issue was first flagged up in August when Jake Sullivan, the US national security adviser, disclosed that Russian defence officials had been in Iran seeking to purchase drones, with the US earlier this month issuing sanctions against an Iranian airline believed to be involved in moving drones to Russia.

The concern over Russia’s new kamikaze drone tactics – and how to counter them – comes amid reports that Ukraine has also signed a contract for a similar system, the US-made Switchblade 600 although those may not arrive for several months.

With a powerful warhead, which has been compared to the force of a Javelin anti-tank missile, the munition is capable of destroying tanks and other armoured vehicles.

Ukraine has also been seeking intelligence and countermeasures from Israel to use against the Iranian drones. Earlier this month Israel’s deputy director for Euro-Asia, Simona Halperin, visited Kyiv, where one of the issues understood to have been raised was Israeli intelligence on Iranian drone technology.

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HEADLINE	09/29 Mortgage rates soar, home prices shock
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/09/29/realestate/mortgage-rates-home-prices.html
GIST	<p>The interest rate for the most common home loan in the United States surpassed 7 percent this week, by one measure — the latest signal that the high-flying housing market is falling back to earth.</p> <p>According to Mortgage News Daily, a popular industry gauge, the average 30-year fixed-rate mortgage reached 7.08 percent on Tuesday. Another survey, by the Mortgage Bankers Association, showed the rate averaging 6.52 percent, the highest reading since mid-2008. Freddie Mac placed it at 6.7 percent, up from 3.01 percent during the same week last year.</p>

The measures vary based on survey criteria and the time of reading, but the message is clear, agents and analysts said: Home buyers and sellers are suffering from sticker shock, and the added borrowing costs are dragging down the market.

Assuming a 10 percent down payment, a home listed at the national median asking price — \$435,050 in August 2022 — cost nearly \$1,000 more each month than it did in August 2021, when the average mortgage rate was 2.88 percent and the median home price was about 14 percent lower, said Danielle Hale, the chief economist at Realtor.com.

“It’s mind-blowing,” Ms. Hale said. “I can’t tell you how many times I’ve thought, ‘I’m so glad I’m not trying to buy a home right now.’”

The spike is largely the result of the Federal Reserve aggressively raising its benchmark interest rate to quash surging inflation.

Higher borrowing costs have already begun to cut into sales. Existing home sales in August were down nearly 20 percent from August 2021, according to the National Association of Realtors, a trade group.

But prices, while moderating, remain high in many markets because inventory is still far below prepandemic levels, said Lawrence Yun, the group’s chief economist. And many who bought homes in the last two years, having locked in some of the best mortgage rates on record, are unlikely to trade up to a new property now, he said, which will limit the supply of homes coming to market.

Although the sudden surge in borrowing costs has been jarring for buyers, 7 percent mortgages are far from an industry record. The rate peaked at over 18 percent in 1981, according to Freddie Mac, though home prices were much lower, relative to median income, at the time.

Few analysts, however, expect the market to crash as it did after the 2008 subprime mortgage crisis, in part because of stricter underwriting practices and a massive swell of home-price appreciation over the last two years.

“If you bought in 2020, you still have a lot of equity,” said Nicole Bachaud, a senior economist with Zillow. The company predicts that national home prices will rise a modest 1.2 percent from August 2022 to August 2023 — well below the 14 percent spike from August 2021 to August 2022.

Still, price cuts are coming, real estate agents and analysts said, especially in markets that saw some of the most frenetic surges in pricing.

“This is the slowest market that I’ve seen in 15 years,” said Andrew Vallejo, a Redfin agent in Austin, Texas, which had one of the most active real estate markets after the start of the pandemic.

The median home sale price in the Austin metro area peaked at \$555,000 in April 2022, an astounding 71 percent increase from April 2020, when the median sale price was \$325,000, according to Redfin data. But since April, the median price has declined every month, landing at \$500,000 in August.

Mr. Vallejo said he bought a three-bedroom fixer-upper in Austin for \$450,000 in 2021, when mortgage rates were still near record lows. He estimated that he could have sold the property earlier this year for more than \$600,000, based on improvements he made and comparable sales nearby, but that after the recent mortgage rate hikes, much of that appreciation has been wiped out.

“I think the challenge is, we don’t know how long this rapid decline is going to last,” he said of home prices. “A lot of buyers and sellers are trapped, in a way.”

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HEADLINE	09/29 China Covid propaganda stirs rebellion
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/09/29/business/china-covid-propaganda.html

“We have won the great battle against Covid!”
“History will remember those who contributed!”
“Extinguish every outbreak!”

These are among the many battle-style slogans that Beijing has unleashed to rally support around its [top-down, zero-tolerance](#) coronavirus policies.

China is now one of the last places on earth trying to eliminate Covid-19, and the Communist Party has relied heavily on propaganda to justify [increasingly long lockdowns](#) and [burdensome testing requirements](#) that can sometimes lead to three tests a week.

The barrage of messages — online and on television, loudspeakers and social platforms — has become so overbearing that some citizens say it has drowned out their frustrations, downplayed the reality of the country’s [tough coronavirus rules](#) and, occasionally, bordered on the absurd.

By Day 8 of a [citywide lockdown in Shanghai](#) this spring, Jason Xue had no more food left in his fridge. Yet when he clicked on [the government’s social media account](#), he noticed that a top city official had vowed to “make every possible endeavor” to address food shortages.

Government assistance didn’t show up until four weeks later, Mr. Xue said.

“I was extremely angry, panicked and despairing,” said Mr. Xue, who works for a financial communications firm. He eventually turned to neighbors for help. “The propaganda was resolute and decisive, but it was different from the reality that we didn’t even know whether we could have the next meal.”

Xi Jinping, China’s leader, has made controlling the virus a “[top political priority](#).” Thousands of state media outlets and social media accounts have echoed Beijing’s “zero Covid” policy and praised the sacrifice of workers trying to control Covid-19.

Propaganda has long been one of the Chinese Communist Party’s favored tools for social control. But in the Covid era, the government’s use of it has been on overdrive. By some estimates, [at least 120 Covid-related propaganda phrases](#) have been created since the beginning of the pandemic.

When certain terms risked upsetting large numbers of people, officials simply came up with new ones. The authorities, for example, have swapped the word “lockdown” with “static management,” “silence” or “working from home” when referring to certain Covid protocols.

“Words shouldn’t be used that way,” Xiao Qiang, the founder of a California-based website that documents Chinese censorship, said in a phone interview. “The government embellished policies with political rhetoric, aiming to mitigate fallout.”

The authorities now avoid words like “lockdown” because they want people to continue to obey stringent coronavirus measures without panic or resistance, Mr. Xiao added. Officials made the policy language “ambiguous and awkward,” he said, which has contributed to confusion and frustration.

When people tried to run away from quarantine buildings during an earthquake in Sichuan Province this year, epidemic workers were caught on camera [blocking](#) them from seeking safety.

Videos of the episode were posted online and quickly deleted by censors, who said people should “[at least bring masks before escaping from buildings](#),” even when an earthquake is “highly destructive.”

For some, the video was a reminder of how the government had used the pandemic to tighten its grip on their private lives, telling them when they can leave their apartments, what kind of food they can buy and what hospitals they can enter.

Kong Lingwanyu, a 22-year-old marketing intern in Shanghai, was upset that officials used the phrase “unless necessary” when describing restrictions around things like leaving the home, dining out or gathering with others.

Ms. Kong said a local official responsible for carrying out coronavirus policies had told her that she should not “buy unnecessary food.” She said she asked the official what standards the government used to determine what kind of food was necessary.

“Who are you to decide the ‘necessity’ for others?” she said. “It’s totally absurd and nonsense.”

On state television, Beijing’s “nine storm fortification actions” around the pandemic are frequently repeated to keep people in line with Covid policies. The nine actions are: neighborhood lockdowns, mass testing, contact tracing, disinfection, quarantine centers, increased health care capacity, traditional Chinese medicine, screening of neighborhoods and prevention of local transmission.

Yang Xiao, a 33-year-old cinematographer in Shanghai who was confined to his apartment for two months during a lockdown this year, had grown tired of them all.

“With the Covid control, propaganda and state power expanded and occupied all aspects of our life,” he said in a phone interview. Day after day, Mr. Yang heard loudspeakers in his neighborhood repeatedly broadcasting a notice for P.C.R. testing. He said the announcements had disturbed his sleep at night and woke him up at dawn.

“Our life was dictated and disciplined by propaganda and state power,” he said.

To communicate his frustrations, Mr. Yang selected 600 common Chinese propaganda phrases, such as “core awareness,” “obey the overall situation” and “the supremacy of nationhood.” He gave each phrase a number and then put the numbers into Google’s Random Generator, a program that scrambles data.

He ended up with senseless phrases such as “detect citizens’ life and death line,” “strictly implement functions” and “specialize overall plans without slack.” Then he used a voice program to read the phrases aloud and played the audio on a loudspeaker in his neighborhood.

No one seemed to notice the five minutes of computer-generated nonsense.

When Mr. Yang uploaded a video of the scene online, however, more than 1.3 million people viewed it. Many praised the way he used government language as satire. Chinese propaganda was “too absurd to be criticized using logic,” Mr. Yang said. “I simulated the discourse like a mirror, reflecting its own absurdity.”

His video was taken down by censors.

Mr. Yang added that he hoped to inspire others to speak out against China’s Covid policies and its use of propaganda in the pandemic. He wasn’t the only Shanghai resident to rebel when the city was locked down.

In June, dozens of residents protested against the police and Covid control workers who installed chain-link fences around neighborhood apartments. When a protester was shoved into a police car and taken away, one man shouted: “Freedom! Equality! Justice! Rule of law!” Those words would be familiar to most Chinese citizens: They are commonly cited by state media as core socialist values under Mr. Xi.

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HEADLINE	09/29 Putin escalates battle of wills with the West
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/09/29/world/europe/ukraine-russia-annexation-putin.html

GIST

President Vladimir V. Putin plans to carry out his threat on Friday to declare that some 40,000 square miles of eastern and southern Ukraine will become part of Russia, an illegal annexation denounced by the West, but a signal that the Russian leader is prepared to raise the stakes in the seven-month-old war against Ukraine.

It is not clear whether even Russia's staunchest allies will recognize Mr. Putin's move, and Russian forces only partly control the land he plans to claim. But by annexing the parts of Ukraine his troops still occupy and then framing his efforts as an existential fight for the survival of the Russian state, Mr. Putin can try to shift the focus of the war from his army's frontline losses to a plane where he seems to feel most confident: a battle of wills with the West.

"He thinks he can win," Andrei Kolesnikov, a senior fellow at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, said in a phone interview from Moscow. "He is provoking an escalation of the war, transferring it to some new status."

Responding to rising popular discontent over the draft he ordered last week, Mr. Putin personally and publicly directed senior security officials to send home people who had been wrongly drafted — a rare implicit admission that his government had stumbled badly.

"All mistakes must be corrected and prevented from happening in the future," Mr. Putin said in televised remarks to his Security Council. "You need to figure all this out — without fuss, calmly but quickly, in detail and thoroughly."

He did not mention his annexation plans, which came as Ukrainian forces are pressing ahead with attacks in the very regions Mr. Putin will declare are part of Russia. But he sought to portray himself as being on the right side of history, asserting in remarks earlier in the day that "the formation of a more just world order is taking place."

"Unipolar hegemony is inexorably collapsing," Mr. Putin said. "This is an objective reality that the West categorically refuses to accept."

The Kremlin announced the annexation plans on Thursday, saying Mr. Putin would sign documents on the entry of new territories into the Russian Federation and give "a voluminous speech."

The ceremony will be accompanied by a festive celebration. Just outside the Kremlin walls, workers were putting up billboards and a giant video screen on Thursday for what state media described as an open-air rally and concert on Friday "in support" of the "referendums" on joining Russia — fraudulent votes that were held in Russian-occupied Ukraine in recent days.

The planned pomp appeared to be aimed at winning public approval and support for the annexation.

Festivities aside, Mr. Putin's declaration will signal a new and more dangerous phase of the war. Once he declares Ukrainian territory to be an inextricable part of Russia — a declaration that Russia's rubber-stamp Parliament and constitutional court are expected to approve by next week — he will rule out any negotiations over that area's future status, analysts said.

And after going through with the annexation, Mr. Putin may also declare that any future Ukrainian military action there threatens Russian territorial integrity — a threat, he said last week, to which Russia's nuclear-armed military may respond with "all the means at our disposal."

"This is not a bluff," he added.

U.S. Secretary of State Antony J. Blinken on Thursday condemned the Kremlin's plans, saying they were part of "a futile effort to mask what amounts to a further attempt at a land grab in Ukraine."

“To be clear,” he added, “the results were orchestrated in Moscow and do not reflect the will of the people of Ukraine. The United States does not, and will never, recognize the legitimacy or outcome of these sham referenda or Russia’s purported annexation of Ukrainian territory.”

The official choreography planned for Friday in Moscow echoes the festivities of March 18, 2014, when Mr. Putin annexed Crimea. On that day, he signed a treaty of accession with the Ukrainian peninsula’s Russian-installed leaders, delivered a defiant speech at the Kremlin, and then rallied Russians at an evening concert in Red Square.

But this time, the context is far more volatile and grave. While Russia captured Crimea without large-scale fighting, Mr. Putin’s annexation will signal an escalation of a war that has already killed tens of thousands. While most Russians cheered the annexation of Crimea, seeing it as a genuine part of Russia, there is little evidence that the broader public is convinced that the four Ukrainian regions now being annexed hold similar significance.

And while Russia had already taken over Crimea when the Kremlin decreed the annexation, Ukraine still holds much of two of the regions being annexed on Friday, Donetsk and Zaporizka. That raises a key question ahead of Mr. Putin’s Friday speech: Will he threaten to use devastating force to compel Ukraine to withdraw from what the Kremlin will characterize as Russian territory?

Ukraine gave no sign that threats by Mr. Putin would cause it to back down. In a speech late on Wednesday, President Volodymyr Zelensky of Ukraine reiterated his denunciation of the referendums and said he was working with foreign leaders to coordinate a strong international response.

“Our key task now is to coordinate actions with partners in response to sham referendums organized by Russia and all related threats,” Mr. Zelensky said.

In Russia, Friday’s fanfare will take place against the backdrop of Mr. Putin’s chaotic “partial mobilization” — the large-scale military draft that he announced on Sept. 21 and that has led to demonstrations, attacks on enlistment offices and tens of thousands of men trying to flee the country. Western experts are skeptical that the mobilization of conscripts will quickly be able to reverse Russia’s battlefield losses.

A poll published by the independent Levada Center on Thursday showed rising anxiety over the war among Russians — a conflict that much of the public had largely tuned out until Mr. Putin’s draft order last week. The poll found 56 percent of Russians saying they were “very alarmed” by events in Ukraine, up from 37 percent in August. Asked what they felt upon hearing of Mr. Putin’s draft order, 47 percent described “anxiety, fear, horror,” while only 27 percent said they felt pride.

But despite Mr. Putin’s setbacks on the battlefield and the domestic headwinds, Russian analysts said he appeared to still see a path to victory in the war — even though it was unclear how, exactly, he would define a victory.

Vasily Kashin, who specializes in military and political issues at the Higher School of Economics in Moscow, said in a phone interview that he believed that the influx of conscripts could yet turn the tide in the war and allow Russia to go on the offensive in Ukraine by the winter. Russian troops might even take control of more key territory like the city of Odesa, he speculated, and precipitate the collapse of Mr. Zelensky’s government.

At the same time, Mr. Kashin said, the war was entering a “very dangerous period.” As the West sends Ukraine more weapons, he said, Mr. Putin would not accept losing control of the regions he is planning to annex on Friday, even if that meant using nuclear weapons and accepting the risk of nuclear escalation.

“We are passing a point of no return tomorrow,” Mr. Kashin said. “After this, we will not be able to refrain from defending these territories with all means, including nuclear weapons.”

	<p>Analysts and officials will be watching Mr. Putin’s speech closely on Friday for signals of how prepared he is to escalate the war. Mr. Kolesnikov, the Carnegie analyst, said that even in the upper crust of Russia’s elite, there was widespread anxiety and uncertainty over what would happen next.</p> <p>“They don’t know what he will come up with tomorrow, and what they should themselves be thinking,” he said.</p>
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HEADLINE	09/29 US signs broad deal to aid Pacific nations
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/09/30/world/asia/pacific-islands-summit-washington.html
GIST	<p>SYDNEY, Australia — The United States and 14 Pacific Island nations signed a broad partnership agreement on Thursday at a summit in Washington, putting climate change, economic growth and stronger security ties at the center of an American push to counter Chinese influence in the region.</p> <p>“A great deal of history of our world is going to be written in the Indo-Pacific over the coming years and decades,” President Biden said at a meeting with island leaders. “And the Pacific Islands are a critical voice in shaping the future.”</p> <p>“The security of America, quite frankly, and the world,” he added, “depends on your security and the security of the Pacific Islands.”</p> <p>His comments — and his promise of greater funding and cooperation from the United States — reflected a realization that has only recently become more urgent in Washington: that China has made significant inroads in the island chains of the North and South Pacific, where thousands of Americans fought and died in World War II, and that America needs to catch up.</p> <p>The summit this week was first announced soon after the Solomon Islands signed a security deal in April with Beijing that opened the door to Chinese training of law enforcement and a possible foothold for Chinese security forces.</p> <p>That agreement may end up being a high-water mark for China, which is viewed more skeptically across the Pacific than it was just a few years ago, but the sensitivities around China’s foreign policy priorities still seemed to hover over the Washington summit.</p> <p>Manasseh Sogavare, the prime minister of the Solomon Islands, initially declined to sign the partnership agreement, in what critics described as a nod to Beijing. His signature and those of the other leaders landed on the declaration only after a provision mentioning Taiwan, an island democracy that China sees as a breakaway province, was stricken from the draft.</p> <p>In briefings, White House officials said that the United States was committed to dialogue with countries in the region about complicated issues. They emphasized that the summit had produced additional partnership opportunities and commitments beyond the recent promise of three new American embassies, in Tonga, the Solomon Islands and Kiribati.</p> <p>The United States will invest more than \$810 million in expanded programs for the Pacific Islands, on top of the more than \$1.5 billion provided in the past decade, according to a White House fact sheet.</p> <p>Much of the money would be for climate resilience and maritime security, including a \$600 million request to Congress related to a decades-old fisheries treaty that allows the United States to catch tuna in South Pacific waters.</p> <p>But the package also includes a few interesting bonbons — a \$20 million grant to the Solomon Islands for tourism development, \$3.5 million for digital connectivity in the country and \$2.8 million for F.B.I.-led law enforcement training.</p>

Initially set aside for three Pacific Island nations, the law enforcement aid will now be spread to six: the Federated States of Micronesia, the Marshall Islands, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Vanuatu and the Solomons.

Peace Corps volunteers will also return to Fiji, Tonga, Samoa and Vanuatu, while other countries are also being considered for the program. And the United States, according to the White House, is also engaged in bilateral negotiations with Fiji on a defense cooperation agreement, and will soon begin talks with Papua New Guinea.

Leaders from the region seemed mostly pleased with the summit. China's leader, Xi Jinping, has been providing red carpet welcomes to Pacific leaders for nearly a decade. The Biden charm offensive seemed to be more casual.

Regional analysts said the American assistance, spread across so many countries, would be far from transformative.

"The dilemma, as always, is how do you get private U.S. companies to invest more in the Pacific," said Graeme Smith, a Pacific Islands expert at the Australian National University. "You can turn the military tap on and, with congressional approval, the aid tap, but unlike China, they can't push their companies to engage with the region."

Anna Powles, a senior lecturer in security studies at Massey University in New Zealand, noted that the announcements of the initiatives were a bit thin on administrative details.

One of the main complaints about American diplomacy in the Pacific is that it is too bogged down by bureaucratic requirements and too under-resourced in terms of personnel, making the United States a red-taped tortoise to China's speedy hare. For many people in the islands, it will take more than fact sheets and summits to change that perception.

"The region will be looking for how all those commitments are going to be executed," Professor Powles said. "They'll be looking for consistency in engagement."

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HEADLINE	09/29 Russia annexation of 4 Ukraine provinces
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/09/29/world/europe/russia-ukraine-annexation-regions.html
GIST	<p>President Vladimir V. Putin plans to declare on Friday that some 40,000 square miles of eastern and southern Ukraine will become part of Russia — an annexation broadly denounced by the West, but a signal that the Russian leader is prepared to raise the stakes in the seven-month-old war.</p> <p>Mr. Putin is expected to deliver a “voluminous” speech, his spokesman said. He is likely to downplay his military’s struggles in Ukraine and rising domestic dissent. He will probably ignore worldwide denunciations of discredited referendums held in occupied Ukraine on joining Russia, where some were made to vote at gunpoint.</p> <p>Here is what we know:</p> <p>What is Russia proposing?</p> <p>Russia is proposing to annex four provinces — Luhansk, Donetsk, Zaporizka and Kherson — in the south and the east of Ukraine where intense fighting continues. Moscow hastily put the plan in motion after a humiliating battlefield defeat drove the Russian Army out of another province, Kharkiv, in early September and the Ukrainian advance appeared to be gathering force.</p> <p>The Kremlin plans to declare the land where battles are raging in all four regions to be Russian territory and to assert that it is defending, not attacking, in the war in Ukraine — and so it is justified to use any military means necessary, a thinly veiled nuclear threat. Annexing the provinces would be used as a</p>

rationale for drafting Ukrainian men living there to fight other Ukrainians in the war, helping to solve a shortage of troops in the Russian Army.

Why does the international community oppose it?

The United States, its European allies and many other countries oppose Russia's nuclear saber rattling and say that allowing a country to capture new territory militarily sets a destabilizing precedent. After Russia's invasion of Ukraine in February, an article published by the Council on Foreign Relations observed that Russia, a member of the United Nations, was violating the United Nations Charter, which requires that U.N. member states refrain from the "use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any state."

Western allies of Ukraine say the supposed referendums showing support for uniting with Russia were a sham, as some residents of occupied areas were forced to vote at gunpoint, and a large portion of the population had fled as internally displaced people or refugees. The final tallies could also have easily been falsified.

How much land in the regions do the Russians control?

Much of the territory Russia is poised to claim as its territory is occupied by the Russian army already. Russia captured and set up client states controlling about a third of two provinces, Donetsk and Luhansk, in a war that began in 2014. Its military advanced into the other two provinces, Zaporizka and Kherson, in the invasion that began in February.

The front lines have shifted in fierce, seesaw fighting over the seven months of the war, with Russia mostly losing ground. The Russian army now controls most of the Luhansk and Kherson regions and about half of the Zaporizka and Donetsk regions. Thousands of square miles of territory and hundreds of cities, towns and villages Russia is poised to claim as its own are now under firm Ukrainian control in the Donetsk and Zaporizka regions, including the capital of one province, the city of Zaporizhzhia.

How is Ukraine responding?

President Volodymyr Zelensky of Ukraine and his ministers and commanders say they will continue their fight to expel the Russian Army from Ukraine, regardless of whether Moscow calls parts of their country Russia.

What is the process, and what comes next?

The Kremlin is using pageantry and a show of adhering to Russian legal formalities to give the annexation a veneer of legitimacy. A rally is planned on Red Square on Friday to celebrate. The proxy leaders of the four provinces have traveled to Moscow and appealed to Mr. Putin to accept their regions as part of Russia. If the process follows a template laid down in 2014 when Russia annexed another Ukrainian region, Crimea, Mr. Putin will submit a draft law to Russia's Parliament proposing to expand the country's borders.

The constitutional court will then review the proposal and both chambers vote on it. There should be no surprises: All members of Parliament are loyal to Mr. Putin. Mr. Putin would then sign the law on accession and claim the new territory.

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HEADLINE	09/29 US sanctions Chinese firms for Iran oil aid
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/09/29/us/politics/iran-sanctions-china-oil.html
GIST	<p>WASHINGTON — The Biden administration announced on Thursday that it would impose sanctions on two Chinese companies that transport and store Iranian oil, a shift to a tougher stance on Tehran amid signs that efforts to restore the 2015 Iran nuclear deal have failed.</p> <p>In a statement, the State Department said the United States was targeting Zhonggu Storage and Transportation Co. Ltd., which it said operates a commercial crude oil storage facility for Iranian</p>

petroleum, and WS Shipping Co. Ltd., which it said manages a vessel that has transported Iranian petroleum products.

The Treasury Department also said eight entities based in Hong Kong, Iran, India and the United Arab Emirates had been designated as sanctions violators.

The actions come as officials in the Biden administration worry that more than 18 months of negotiations to contain Iran's nuclear program may have reached a dead end and suggest they have begun reaching for new forms of leverage over the country's hard-line leadership.

The sanctions against Chinese companies could also presage a tense confrontation with Beijing over its substantial purchases of Iranian oil, which have provided Iran's government with a badly needed windfall, to the frustration of the Biden administration.

President Donald J. Trump withdrew from a 2015 agreement clinched by the Obama administration and imposed new sanctions on Iran, leading Tehran to significantly accelerate its nuclear program. U.S. officials estimate that Iran could be within one month of having enough highly enriched uranium to produce a nuclear weapon, which might take a year or more to build.

This month, the United States and Iran appeared on the brink of restoring the nuclear deal after the European Union presented a "final text" for their joint agreement. Biden officials say that Iranian negotiators raised 11th-hour obstacles, including a demand that the International Atomic Energy Agency close an investigation into past undeclared Iranian nuclear activity.

During a visit to the U.N. gathering, Iran's president, Ebrahim Raisi, struck a bellicose tone and demanded more U.S. concessions.

As Iran struggles with punishing American sanctions imposed by Mr. Trump after he unilaterally abandoned the nuclear deal in 2018, China has helped Tehran stay solvent by purchasing large quantities of oil, which is its main export. Reuters reported in March that China now imports more oil from Iran than it did before Mr. Trump piled new sanctions on Tehran, citing data from three tanker-tracking companies that indicated China was importing around 700,000 barrels per day.

"China is principally responsible for keeping the Iranian regime in business through oil purchases that have totaled \$38 billion since President Joe Biden assumed office," the nonprofit group United Against a Nuclear Iran said in a report last week.

"China has therefore proven to be the savior of Tehran by continuing to import millions of barrels of oil every single day," the group said, calling for tougher U.S. action against Chinese entities.

A State Department spokesman said on Wednesday that some public estimates of Iranian oil trade with China "have been inflated."

Existing U.S. sanctions allow for penalties against foreign governments whose companies import oil from Iran, but the Biden administration has refrained from taking that step against China.

Instead, the administration has tried for months to persuade Beijing to prevent Chinese companies from facilitating the export of Iranian oil, but to little avail. Thursday's action suggests that the Biden administration may be losing its patience with China and will take increasing unilateral steps.

The State Department said in a statement that as Iran pursues its nuclear program in violation of the 2015 agreement's limits, "we will continue to accelerate our enforcement of sanctions on Iran's petroleum and petrochemical sales under authorities that would be removed" under a restored nuclear deal.

	<p>“These enforcement actions will continue on a regular basis, with an aim to severely restrict Iran’s oil and petrochemical exports,” the statement said. “Anyone involved in facilitating these illegal sales and transactions should cease and desist immediately if they wish to avoid U.S. sanctions.”</p> <p>The United States first imposed sanctions on a Chinese company for violating restrictions on the purchase of Iranian oil in July 2019, when Mike Pompeo, then the secretary of state under Mr. Trump, announced penalties against a state-owned oil trading company, Zhuhai Zhenrong, and its chief executive, Li Youmin.</p> <p>After Washington imposed expansive sanctions on Iran in 2018, the Trump administration granted waivers to eight governments, including that of China, to continue importing limited amounts of oil. But those waivers expired in May 2019.</p> <p>Zhuhai Zhenrong and Sinopec, another state-owned enterprise, were the largest importers in China of Iranian oil.</p> <p>A New York Times investigation from August 2019 found that China and other countries were receiving oil shipments from a larger number of Iranian oil tankers than previously known. Even after the waivers expired that year, 12 Iranian tankers loaded and delivered oil across Asia and the Mediterranean, with six of those unloading their cargo at ports in China.</p> <p>Last month, the State and Treasury Departments announced sanctions against six companies, four of them based in Hong Kong, for helping sell tens of millions of dollars of Iranian oil and petrochemical products.</p>
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HEADLINE	09/29 States file lawsuit over student debt relief
SOURCE	https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2022/sep/29/six-states-sue-biden-administration-over-student-d/
GIST	<p>Six Republican-led states on Thursday sued the Biden administration over plans to cancel student loan debt, a move the lawsuit says will hurt the working class at a time when the economy is already struggling.</p> <p>“The economy is not well,” reads the lawsuit filed in federal court in Missouri. “And there is no sign of relief.”</p> <p>The Biden administration announced in August plans to cancel \$10,000 to \$20,000 of student debt per borrower for those who make less than \$125,000 a year — or \$250,000 for married couples.</p> <p>“In addition to being economically unwise and downright unfair, the Biden Administration’s Mass Debt Cancellation is yet another example in a long line of unlawful regulatory actions. No statute permits President Biden to unilaterally relieve millions of individuals from their obligation to pay loans they voluntarily assumed,” reads the 36-page lawsuit.</p> <p>The attorneys general from Arkansas, Nebraska, South Carolina, Missouri and Kansas are asking the court to pause the action, arguing the proposal exceeds presidential authority and would violate the Constitution and federal law. Iowa joined the lawsuit through its Republican governor.</p> <p>The administration, meanwhile, has reasoned it has authority under a federal law allowing the feds to cancel certain debt during times of emergency.</p> <p>A spokesperson from the Justice Department did not immediately respond to a request for comment.</p> <p>Borrowers will be able to apply for the forgiveness in October.</p> <p>But the coalition of attorneys general and Iowa’s governor say hard-working Americans will pay the price.</p> <p>“It’s patently unfair to saddle hard-working Americans with the loan debt of those who chose to go to college,” said Arkansas Attorney General Leslie Rutledge, who led the lawsuit.</p>

	<p>“The Department of Education is required, under the law, to collect the balance due on loans. And President Biden does not have the authority to override that.”</p> <p>It’s the second legal battle the feds are facing over the president’s plan this week. The other lawsuit was filed by an advocacy group.</p>
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HEADLINE	09/29 Woman faces fines for sign inside her home
SOURCE	https://www.kiro7.com/news/local/olympia-woman-facing-fines-over-sign-inside-her-home/WKN2BOW4G5HUZF2U6ZKXOMA4KI/
GIST	<p>An Olympia woman is being threatened with fines over a sign hanging inside her home.</p> <p>Shirley Pavao’s homeowners association called a Black Lives Matter sign a violation of the Lost Lake Resort community policy. However, she said she has become a target of a policy that is not legal.</p> <p>Pavao has until Saturday to remove the sign or be fined.</p> <p>“This is my living room. This is my Black Lives Matter artwork on my wall,” Pavao told KIRO 7’s Gwen Baumgardner.</p> <p>The sign has been a point of tension in the rural neighborhood for more than two years.</p> <p>“There was an outcry in the community. Specific people started complaining, wanted it down,” Pavao said.</p> <p>The complaints started in the summer of 2020 when she hung the sign in her front window but her HOA board took action.</p> <p>“The previous board wrote up a new rule limiting what people could have on their homes, the outside of their units, what you could have in your yard, what type of signs, nothing political, so I immediately removed my sign,” Pavao said.</p> <p>She then placed the sign on her living room wall and that was the end of it until last week. She received another complaint from the board.</p> <p>She received an email outlining how homes can’t have signs or flags supporting or opposing political candidates, social movements, humanitarian causes or religious beliefs. And it applies to signs outside of the homes, as well as anything displaced from inside a window facing outside that can be seen from the roadway or neighboring units.</p> <p>“How did the board go from you can’t have outside signs or signs outside your building to determining that they have a legal right to determine what I have in my home?”</p> <p>She said she feels targeted and pointed to other neighbors who appeared to be in clear violation. At one home, a Trump doormat could be seen on the ground. At another, a thin blue line flag was noticeable.</p> <p>Pavao plans to appeal the violation and says she is disappointed it has come to this.</p> <p>“I cannot express how tired I am- intellectually, emotionally. How disappointed I am with some of the people in this park. How much it hurts me that my family does not feel comfortable here, because they are people of color too,” Pavao said.</p> <p>While Pavao adds that she is frustrated, there are some good neighbors at the park and she still considers it home.</p>

	KIRO 7 reached out to the COA to address some of Pavao's concerns about the policy. However, we have not heard back.
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HEADLINE	09/29 Under-18 to ride ferries free beginning Oct 1
SOURCE	https://komonews.com/news/local/kids-teens-18-and-under-to-ride-ferries-free-beginning-oct-1#
GIST	<p>SEATTLE — Kids and teens 18 years old and younger will ride Washington State Ferries (WSF) for free beginning Saturday.</p> <p>WSF said the free entry for youths is part of the Move Ahead Washington transportation package. "The law directs transit agencies to provide free fares for passengers 18 and under across the state," according to WSF's press release.</p> <p>The legislation only applies to youth riding as a vehicle passenger or walk-on; not teens driving a car, WSF said. Drivers 18 and younger will pay the adult vehicle and driver fare.</p> <p>The new transportation package not only applies to ferries but to all public transit in the state of Washington.</p> <p>"This is something a generation will grow up with in the future that will utilize public transit more," Dana Warr with the Washington State Ferries said. "We have about a million and a half youth that travels on ferries and that's some money people can save in their pockets."</p> <p>KOMO News caught up with some families using the ferry Thursday morning in downtown Seattle.</p> <p>Beth Peterson and her children Emmett and Adele were some of them.</p> <p>"I love it! We love taking the ferry, we live in West Seattle so we use it a lot," Beth said. "Even for a family of four, not having to pay for kids anymore will really help."</p> <p>Passengers 18 and younger who are riding in a car or walking onto a state ferry will receive free fare. ,</p> <p>Teenagers behind the wheel will still be required to pay to ride a ferry.</p> <p>"What better way to start the youth out with a free service on a ferry across the sound," Warr said. "As they get older and have their own families, hopefully they will use it more."</p>
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HEADLINE	09/29 Pickleball frenzy noise complaints, lawsuits
SOURCE	https://komonews.com/news/local/pickleball-frenzy-comes-with-noise-complaints-and-lawsuits#
GIST	<p>VANCOUVER, Wash. — Pickleball, invented in the Northwest, is sweeping the country, and even the world.</p> <p>The sport, if you haven't seen it, is played on a court -- a bit smaller than a tennis court and a bit bigger than ping pong table, and it has its own set of rules.</p> <p>To meet the demand for the popular sport, Clark County is proposing four new courts at Pacific Community Park in Vancouver.</p> <p>But the idea of a pickleball court doesn't sound so good to everyone.</p> <p>"There's some sonic decibel sound when the ball strikes the paddle that's quite higher than you would expect," says Clark Parks Planning and Development Manager David Stipe.</p>

There have been lawsuits filed over the noise coming from the courts.

The city of Lake Oswego shut down courts at George Rogers Park after too many neighbor complaints.

"We've done a lot of research on the issues that evolve around the noise. It's not just the sound of the ball hitting the wood paddle. People get really passionate about their game, so there's some cheering. That's why we're focusing on any pickleball court development we do in the Clark Parks System on our community parks and not our neighborhood parks, which are much smaller than Pacific Park. We just felt it was a really good site because it's about 7 to 800 feet from the nearest residences. And has a really good sound buffer, with all the vegetation for the closest residences to the south," said Stipe.

At Padelhorn, a pickleball and paddle center in Vancouver, the four pickleball courts there are usually full, a testament to the growing popularity of the sport and the need for more places to play.

"It's getting popular for a reason. Everybody loves it. Give it a shot, and you're stuck, yeah," said Christian Ekhorn, one of the owners of Padelhorn.

Not surprisingly, players agree.

"You can pick it up pretty quick. That's really nice, and then you start to learn some nuances. It's a great workout, and I have not the best knees, so it's really good for people who aren't as mobile," said pickleball player Brandee Heppler.

"You catch on quicker, and you can have a lot better games a lot faster, and I'm kind of clumsy myself, so it works out good. No, it's just a fun game," said Ryan Rosenlund.

"The more courts we have the better, more people can play. And get out and exercise. And there's a lot of seniors out there playing," said Carol Regan.

Clark County plans to put more courts in.

Four courts will be part of a new community park in the north end of the district. Construction will start next year.

With the popularity of tennis going down slightly, you might see some changes on those courts.

"We don't anticipate it being where we take every tennis court and turn it into a pickleball courts. We might stripe them and have the option to go either way. That's pretty common. We've looked at striping some of our basketball half courts, with a pickleball court on it so it can be multi-purpose" said Stipe.

If you have questions or you'd like to let the county know your thoughts on the pickleball courts, you can mail or mail the county, the deadline is Oct. 21.

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HEADLINE	09/29 Police raid Spokane Hells Angels clubhouse
SOURCE	https://www.krem.com/article/news/local/spokane-county/spokane-hells-angels-raid/293-a510cb9e-1b81-495b-9b6a-a45c181b1c28
GIST	<p>SPOKANE COUNTY, Wash. — The Spokane Police Department (SPD) served a search warrant at the Hells Angels Clubhouse located at the 1300 block of East Sprague on Thursday morning.</p> <p>According to Cpl. Nick Briggs with SPD, the search warrant is part of a joint investigation with SPD and federal investigators. No one was injured during the raid.</p> <p>The search warrant is currently sealed and more information is expected to be released in the coming days.</p>
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HEADLINE	09/29 Armed vet patrols outside Thurston schools
SOURCE	https://www.q13fox.com/news/armed-veteran-patrols-outside-schools-in-north-thurston-public-schools
GIST	<p>LACEY, Wash. - One local veteran is taking safety into his own hands by patrolling around schools in North Thurston Public Schools in direct response to the mass shooting at a school in Uvalde, Texas earlier this year.</p> <p>Anthony Triplett has become a familiar face around campuses, voluntarily patrolling outside schools while carrying a glock, medical supplies and wearing a bulletproof vest.</p> <p>"This is kind of where we are right now as a society and I want to do my part to help out," said Triplett.</p> <p>Triplett is a disabled veteran and father who has two girls attending public schools in the district.</p> <p>He founded Veteran Overwatch and says he started patrolling schools nearly two weeks after the shooting in Uvalde, Texas.</p> <p>Triplett says he tries to volunteer four hours each day, making rounds outside different schools with his dog, Jade. His bulletproof vest has a large Veteran Overwatch patch on the front.</p> <p>"I want to be identified, so they know and because the resource officers know who I am," said Triplett. "There's no confusion."</p> <p>He says the community response has been overwhelmingly positive and that everyone has been "extremely grateful and nice."</p> <p>North Thurston Public Schools says Triplett is not employed with them.</p> <p>While they're aware of him, they would only say "he is operating on a public street and as a private citizen."</p> <p>In response to school shootings, the district sent FOX 13 these strategies that are in place:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Building safety measures: Secure entrances, high-definition security cameras, one-button building lockout systems, and more provide tools for both prevention and response to incidents in our schools.</i> • <i>Critical incident response: A district team is trained to coordinate communication, reunification, support services, and other logistics in an emergency.</i> • <i>Safety drills: At least one lockdown, shelter-in-place, or evacuation drill is conducted monthly in every school, helping staff and students practice their response to a crisis at school.</i> • <i>School Resource Officers: City of Lacey and Thurston County Officers are assigned to each of our schools and work to ensure a safe environment for student learning. We have a total of four trained SRO's in our district that are assigned to our schools. NTPS has benefited from the SRO program for 20 + years and we have found ways to prioritize support for the program through budget cuts and staffing shortages.</i> <p>Triplett says he is in contact with the school resource officers in the district.</p> <p>"I'll share a message with them in the morning 'Hey, I'm going to be around this school today at this time, if you need me, I'll be here,' and vice versa," said Triplett</p> <p>Triplett says if an incident were to happen at a school, it could take around 20 minutes for another officer to arrive and Triplett believes Veteran Overwatch can bridge the response time.</p> <p>While Triplett says he has community support, Dylan O'Connor, the government affairs director with Alliance for Gun Responsibility doesn't believe this is a good idea.</p>

	<p>"There's no data anywhere to suggest that the presence of firearms in or around school can mitigate gun violence. It only increases it," said O'Connor.</p> <p>Regardless of intent, O'Connor believes more voices should be heard.</p> <p>"I'd be curious to know what some students feel about what's happening around their school rather than general support in the community," said O'Connor.</p> <p>Triplett says Veteran Overwatch is made up of at least six community members and four other veterans, including Derek Sanders, a Thurston County Sheriff candidate.</p> <p>If Sanders wins, Triplett says a pilot program is in the works to put a trained Veteran Overwatch member to stand guard in schools.</p> <p>"The plan for us is to be part of the sheriff's reserves program with Thurston County Sheriff's Office," said Triplett.</p> <p>For now, Triplett is planning a public meeting next month, where anyone can meet Veteran Overwatch members and ask them questions about the organization.</p> <p>The exact date is to be determined but will be announced on their website and social media pages.</p> <p>We reached out to the Thurston County Sheriff's Office for comment but have not heard back as of Thursday evening.</p>
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HEADLINE	09/29 Ian's staggering scale of Florida wreckage
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/09/29/us/hurricane-ian-florida-damage.html
GIST	<p>FORT MYERS, Fla. — The extent of Hurricane Ian's destruction became clearer on Thursday as people across southwestern Florida, left without electricity, drinking water or inhabitable homes, began to assess the damage and gird for what Gov. Ron DeSantis said would be a yearslong recovery.</p> <p>The scale of the wreckage was staggering, even to Florida residents who had survived and rebuilt after other powerful hurricanes. The storm pulverized roads, toppled trees, gutted downtown storefronts and set cars afloat, leaving a soggy scar of ruined homes and businesses from the coastal cities of Naples and Fort Myers to inland communities around Orlando.</p> <p>Although state officials had not released a death toll by late in the day, Mr. DeSantis said Thursday night that "we absolutely expect" to learn of storm-related fatalities as rescuers work through a backlog of 911 calls and scour the most devastated neighborhoods. More than 500 people in Charlotte and Lee Counties, the hardest hit, had been rescued on Thursday, the Florida Division of Emergency Management said; the small town of Fort Myers Beach, on a barrier island just off the coast, appeared decimated.</p> <p>While Ian left Florida on Thursday afternoon as a tropical storm, South Carolina residents were bracing for lashing winds and heavy rain as it quickly became a hurricane again at sea; forecasters said it could strengthen again before doubling back onto land there by Friday.</p> <p>Photos from several areas of the state showed homes crunched together in a chaotic jumble, or smashed into what looked like toothpicks. Fishing boats and pleasure cruisers had been hurled onto the ground as if they were bathtub toys. The streets were a perilous obstacle course of toppled trees and downed wires.</p> <p>In North Fort Myers, where Marion Burkholder, 84, survived the storm by clambering into a dinghy inside a neighbor's screened-in porch and floating up with the rising waters, Thursday brought dreaded news. Her carpets were sopping and her floors were covered with a dark brown liquid. Her fridge lay on its side.</p>

“Everything floated,” said Marvis Long, 96, who lives nearby. “The water was coming in just like waves in here.”

Mayors, sheriffs and other officials surveying the damage struggled to even describe its scope. The sheriff in Volusia County, near Orlando on the state’s east coast, said by text message that the coastal county was seeing “unprecedented flooding.” Mr. DeSantis said there had been “biblical” storm surge on Sanibel Island, normally a tourist haven of gleaming beaches and mangroves southwest of Fort Myers.

“The damage that was done has been historic,” Mr. DeSantis said in a briefing on Thursday. “We’ve never seen a flood event like this. We’ve never seen storm surge of this magnitude.”

On Fort Myers Beach, a laid-back strip dotted with hotels, bars and restaurants that for many Southwest Florida residents offered a cherished escape from the mainland, the storm had laid waste to beloved landmarks, including the fishing pier and Times Square, the communal gathering spot where sunset was celebrated each night. Several residents of the island reported not hearing from friends who rode out the storm there.

“When you look at Fort Myers Beach in particular, there’s no words to describe it,” Sheriff Carmine Marceno of Lee County said after taking a helicopter tour of his county, which is just to the north of where Hurricane Ian came ashore as a Category 4 hurricane on Wednesday with winds up to 155 miles per hour.

The causeway to nearby Sanibel Island had a missing section and a collapsed section, said Jared Moskowitz, Florida’s former emergency management chief, who flew over the area on Thursday. “Fort Myers Beach and Sanibel Island look like they will need to be 80 percent rebuilt,” he estimated.

The storm’s heavy blow to infrastructure complicated efforts to gauge the damage — early estimates said insured losses could reach up to \$40 billion — and to reach hard-hit barrier islands, where homes and businesses were now heaps of wood pulp and broken concrete. Cell service was spotty or nonexistent up and down the coast, another agonizing impediment to residents’ efforts to seek help or reach missing family members.

“You’re powerless to help,” said Julie Hittle, who lives in Texas and has been anxiously waiting for updates from her brother, who fled his flooding apartment in Naples by crawling out a window and onto the roof of a minivan.

When a flicker of cell service returned on Thursday evening, her brother, Chip Aldridge, 56, recounted how he, his fiancée and dog, Kobi, had walked two miles through the storm and ended up at a La Quinta Inn, where they were now staying because their apartment was a mildewy shambles. Mr. Aldridge had lost everything in Hurricane Irma in 2017, and was now facing the prospect of starting over, once again.

“We’re survivors,” Mr. Aldridge said in a telephone interview. “Last night was shock and just exhaustion. This morning was, OK, what’s next? Tomorrow we go face the actual reality.”

The economic toll of the storm in a region heavily dependent on tourism and recreation was only beginning to be felt. Universal Studios in Orlando had not announced when it would reopen, though Disney said its theme parks appeared to have minimal structural damage and would start to reopen on Friday. On both the east and west coasts, beachside bars, boardwalks and piers that had been bustling with tourists a week ago were now a wasteland of muddy debris.

At least 2.6 million people remained without power on Thursday, though Florida officials said there were 20,000 utility workers poised to start getting power back on.

The storm severed sections of two bridges connecting mainland Florida to barrier islands in the Gulf of Mexico and reduced some roads to rubble while littering others with trees and power lines. Rescuers were arriving by air and sea to reach people who had not evacuated.

Across the region on Thursday, people waded back home and trudged up muddy, debris-covered streets that had been raging waterways just a day earlier to see what, if anything, had survived.

In Port Charlotte, across a river from where the storm made landfall, Teresa Madden and her husband slipped on waders to slog through thigh-deep brown water — risking encounters with red ants, snakes and the two alligators known to live in the lake at their community for people 55 and older.

The water had spared most of the homes, but one had been destroyed by the wind, its roof gashed open to reveal the remnants of a dining room. A clock still hung on the wall, but most everything else lay in tatters on the sodden grass: a flower pot, socks, a festive tinsel leprechaun.

Elsewhere in the complex, Sarah Walters, 41, arrived in flip-flops and cutoff shorts to assess the damage to her mother's house. It could have been worse, she said. But she still could not reach her mother, who had evacuated to her nurse's house. Ms. Walters spent the storm at her own home about a mile away, with her husband and stepdaughter bracing against their front door for three hours to keep it from blowing in.

"We just have to figure out a way to fix things," she said.

People who decided not to evacuate described harrowing escapes through chest-high floodwaters. Some made it out on a kayak or jet skied down a four-lane road. Some huddled on top of cars. Some had to flee to their second floors and watched couches and furniture float through their living rooms.

In Naples Park, Joe Lema, 76, and his wife, Joyce, 70, spent four hours trapped inside their house by the force and weight of the rising water outside. Unable to open the doors, they tried to break their expensive hurricane impact windows, to no avail. They called 911, but they were told it was too late.

"I said a lot of prayers," Mrs. Lema said on Thursday. They had been in the evacuation zone but said nothing like this had ever happened since buying the home in 1986.

Chad Sulkes thought he had been prepared for the worst, having bought a generator, gas, food and a portable air-conditioner until Ian's storm surge began to invade his home in Naples Park, forcing him to flee into the storm.

"There's no items you can buy to prepare for that," he said. "The only preparation is to leave."

On Thursday, he returned to the house he rents on Seagull Drive to find it in complete disarray. His boat in the canal out back was sinking. All his furniture and belongings were strewn about, covered in mud. The floor was slick with mud tainted with gasoline.

Cities farther inland and along the Atlantic Coast appeared to have endured the storm's lacerating winds with less damage than the southwestern coast where Ian first made landfall. But at points during the day, heavy rains fueled warnings from the National Weather Service of "widespread, life-threatening catastrophic flooding" in Central Florida.

At the Avante, an assisted-living facility in Orlando, rescuers sloshed through floods to evacuate the facility's 100 residents, carrying some out on stretchers as rain and wind whirled around them. Some hospitals and nursing homes were managing to run on generator power while patients from at least 16 hospitals and an additional 3,500 nursing-home residents were evacuated from other facilities in southwestern Florida, industry officials said.

There were surreal moments of destruction mixed with normalcy. The streets of downtown Fort Myers were littered with plant matter and other debris from the surging Caloosahatchee River. But the waters had receded by Thursday afternoon and several restaurants were open and packed with people in undershirts, shorts and flip flops looking for something warm to eat.

	<p>Diane Dorsey, 57, and her family moved to Fort Myers in 2019 from Maryland, considering it a pre-retirement adventure, never imagining what devastation a hurricane could bring. When the storm sent one river rushing past the front of her house and another through the backyard, Ms. Dorsey ordered her daughter to grab the family photo albums and head upstairs.</p> <p>Though their house did not sustain major damage, they were among the Floridians wondering on Thursday whether they should pack up and never return rather than risking a repeat disaster some day.</p> <p>The Southwest Florida coast has swelled with new residents since Hurricane Charley, the strongest storm many people here remember, struck in 2004.</p> <p>“There’s no state taxes,” Ms. Dorsey said. “But oh my goodness.”</p> <p>Her 18-year-old daughter, Angel Dorsey, chimed in: “I like the snow better.”</p>
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HEADLINE	09/30 Ian barrels to next target: the Carolinas
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/live/2022/09/30/us/hurricane-ian-florida-south-carolina#ian-barrels-toward-its-next-target-the-carolinas
GIST	<p>Hurricane Ian was moving north over the Atlantic early Friday morning as it bore down on a fresh target: the Carolinas.</p> <p>Even though skies had cleared over parts of Florida, more than 2.6 million people living in Florida, Georgia and North Carolina and South Carolina were under a hurricane warning as of 2 a.m. Eastern time. Nearly twice as many people were under storm surge warnings. Under a hurricane warning, hurricane effects are expected, and a surge warning indicates there is danger of storm surge.</p> <p>President Biden declared an emergency in South Carolina and ordered federal assistance late Thursday. The Category 1 hurricane was less than 200 miles south-southeast of Charleston, S.C., a low-lying coastal city of about 150,000 people, as of 2 a.m. Forecasters predicted that its eye would come ashore about 20 miles east of Charleston later on Friday, potentially sending up to seven feet of water surging into normally dry areas.</p> <p>Ian would be the first hurricane to make landfall in South Carolina since Hurricane Matthew in 2016, a National Weather Service official said. Governor Henry McMaster issued a state of emergency order on Wednesday but had not ordered evacuations as of early Friday morning.</p> <p>Before the storm hits South Carolina, its track could wobble closer to Charleston’s metropolitan area, said Steven Taylor, a lead meteorologist at the National Weather Service office there.</p> <p>“Any kind of wobble is a problem,” he added.</p> <p>Charleston, an old city with many drains that empty directly into the sea, is prone to flooding. Forecasters said that if Ian happens to make landfall during the Charleston area’s next high tide — expected around 11:30 a.m. Friday — the effects of heavy rain and storm surge would be worse.</p> <p>But focusing exclusively on the eye’s location would be misleading because Ian will have effects for hundreds of miles no matter where it makes landfall, Mr. Taylor said. That is partly because the storm is becoming more asymmetric as it moves north through colder waters, meaning that its highest winds are not as concentrated as they were a few days ago.</p> <p>The sheer volume of precipitation forecast for the Carolinas could also pose a problem, said Jordan Baker, a forecaster at the Weather Service’s office in Wilmington, N.C. A stretch of coastline that includes Myrtle Beach, a city less than 100 miles northeast of Charleston, is expected to get up to 8</p>

	<p>inches of rainfall, with isolated totals peaking at 12 inches, according to the National Hurricane Center. Up to 8 inches were also forecast for parts of North Carolina and southern Virginia.</p> <p>“Sometimes we get a little complacent because our soils naturally just drain really well,” Mr. Baker said during a phone interview just before midnight on Thursday. “But it’s definitely nothing to take lightly” In Charleston, climate change has exacerbated a generations-old struggle with flooding, forcing city officials to rethink their approach to urban development and architectural preservation.</p> <p>Charleston is one of several American cities where the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is proposing building a massive sea wall to protect against storm surge. But that could be years away.</p> <p>A nearly \$200 million project to upgrade the city’s antiquated drains is underway. But officials have said that construction won’t be finished until late 2024 at the earliest.</p>
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HEADLINE	09/30 Charleston braces for Hurricane Ian
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/live/2022/09/30/us/hurricane-ian-florida-south-carolina#with-memories-of-hurricane-hugo-charleston-braces-for-ian
GIST	<p>NORTH CHARLESTON, S.C. — As Hurricane Ian approached the South Carolina coastline, people seeking shelter at an elementary school eyed the storm warily. The devastation of another hurricane nearly three decades ago was still fresh in their minds.</p> <p>When Hurricane Hugo hit Charleston in 1989, Barry Sean Robinson, 55, and his family had no choice but to stay in the city. Back then, the roaring wind of the tropical cyclone sounded “like a freight train.”</p> <p>“I rode it out because we had no money to leave,” he said. The storm killed dozens of people and left a path of destruction in the Caribbean and Southeastern United States.</p> <p>On Thursday evening, Mr. Robinson, who is homeless, was one of about two dozen people who were given chicken sandwiches and a place to sleep at Matilda Dunston Elementary School in North Charleston, a relief effort organized by the American Red Cross. The shelter will be open for the next few days as Charleston girds itself for the storm.</p> <p>Karl, 57, who was also at the shelter Thursday night, remembered Hugo too: the uprooted palm trees and the flooding of his family’s home. Most of all, he remembered praying with his mother and brother as the storm howled above them. “I don’t want to see nothing like Hugo,” he said.</p>
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HEADLINE	09/29 How Hurricane Ian became so powerful
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2022/09/29/climate/hurricane-ian-florida-intensity.html
GIST	<p>New data from NASA reveals how warm ocean waters in the Gulf of Mexico fueled Hurricane Ian to become one of the most powerful storms to strike the United States in the past decade.</p> <p>Sea surface temperatures were especially warm off Florida’s southwest coast, allowing the storm to pick up energy just before crashing into the state north of Fort Myers.</p> <p>The storm brought fierce winds, unrelenting rains and catastrophic flooding to southwest Florida. As it moved inland, it lost power and was downgraded to a tropical storm, but grew into a hurricane again as it traveled across the warm Atlantic toward South Carolina.</p> <p>Storms usually weaken as they move over land and lose access to their main source of moisture and energy.</p>

Hurricane Ian was able to, over the course of its path, pull a lot of energy out of the ocean, which could have sustained it for longer than normal, said Christopher Slocum, a physical scientist at the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

September is the peak of hurricane season, spurred by temperatures in the Gulf that are warmer than at other times of the year, experts say. The climate phenomenon [known as La Niña](#) has also contributed to more favorable conditions for hurricanes in the North Atlantic over the past three years.

However, waters off the coast were also two to three degrees Fahrenheit warmer than usual for this time of year, according to preliminary data from NASA.

And a few degrees can make a huge difference, said Karthik Balaguru, a climate scientist at Pacific Northwest National Laboratory, because it provides extra energy for a storm.

Unlike with land or the atmosphere, “it’s very difficult to warm the ocean,” Dr. Balaguru said. A large amount of heat had to have been absorbed by the ocean just to raise temperatures by a small fraction of a degree, he said.

[More than 90 percent](#) of the excess heat from human-caused global warming over the past 50 years has been absorbed by the oceans, and a majority of it is stored in the top few hundred meters.

Scientists say that while climate change has not necessarily increased the number of hurricanes, it has made them more powerful, as warmer ocean waters strengthen and sustain those storms. The proportion of the most severe storms — Categories 4 and 5 — has increased since 1980, when satellite imagery began reliably tracking hurricanes.

As the climate warms, more storms are also undergoing [rapid intensification](#), which describes an increase of at least 35 miles per hour in the maximum sustained winds over a 24-hour period. Ian rapidly intensified multiple times, as did a number of the past decade’s most powerful Atlantic storms. Hurricane Harvey in 2017 surged from a Category 1 hurricane to a Category 4 overnight. In 2021, Ida strengthened from a Category 1 to a near-Category 5 in less than 24 hours.

A warmer climate also allows hurricanes to unleash more rain, a consequence of an atmosphere that, with each degree Celsius of warming, can hold about 7 percent more water vapor that then gets released as precipitation. In addition, storm surges are riding on top of elevated sea levels, which can worsen coastal flooding.

Wetter, more intense hurricanes can have devastating consequences for the communities they strike, said Kristie L. Ebi, a professor in the University of Washington’s Center for Health and the Global Environment. For the most part, the most damage to life and property both during a hurricane and its aftermath comes from the flooding, not the winds, she said.

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HEADLINE	09/29 WAANG to assist Ian first responders
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/wa-air-national-guard-to-assist-hurricane-ian-responders/
GIST	<p>Gov. Jay Inslee has ordered the Washington Air National Guard to deploy a team to help first responders in the wake of Hurricane Ian.</p> <p>Thousands in Florida were trapped after the hurricane caused extensive damage and knocked out electricity to 2.67 million homes, The Associated Press reported. The death toll remains unknown, but President Joe Biden said the hurricane could be the deadliest in Florida’s history.</p> <p>The four-person Washington Air National Guard team will offer communication support to other responders through Oct. 14, Inslee wrote in a letter to Maj. Gen. Bret Daugherty.</p>

	<p>The team will help deploy Starlink satellite communication terminals, which are devices on the ground that connect to satellites that provide internet access without the need for a cable connection, the National Guard said in a news release.</p> <p>Responders also used that technology, developed by SpaceX, during Washington’s 2020 wildfire season. The team’s deployment comes after Florida officials submitted a request to Washington under a mutual-aid agreement ratified by Congress.</p> <p>“We are happy to provide this critical capability to the first responders in Florida as they perform the important task of recovering after Hurricane Ian,” Daugherty said in a statement.</p>
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HEADLINE	09/29 Seattle boosts King Co. homeless budget
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/homeless/king-county-homelessness-agency-may-see-modest-budget-boost/
GIST	<p>It wasn’t the radically larger budget the King County Regional Homelessness Authority was seeking, but it also wasn’t the cutback that had been hinted at.</p> <p>On Tuesday, Seattle Mayor Bruce Harrell and King County Executive Dow Constantine proposed budgets that could result in the new homelessness agency receiving a modest increase in funding in its second full year if the Seattle City Council and Metropolitan King County Council approve them.</p> <p>Also tucked within the mayor’s budget is a proposal to cap wage increases for service providers that is drawing controversy amongst advocates and some council members.</p> <p>Harrell’s budget included \$87.7 million for the Regional Homelessness Authority which the mayor said represented a 13% increase from the previous year.</p> <p>“We have seen some incredibly impressive early indicators of success,” Harrell said. “Our continued funding reflects our commitment to that mission.”</p> <p>Over the past year, the city has touted a higher figure that it provides the authority — \$118 million. However, that’s because last year’s budget included \$40.6 million in one-time federal coronavirus relief funding, which is not available this year. That doesn’t mean homelessness programs are going away. The authority has not spent all that money, which it can do through 2024.</p> <p>The additional \$10.3 million in funding will go toward expanding shelter beds in the city — 50 tiny homes and more than 100 vehicle safe lots. The mayor said that “ensures we will meet” his promise of adding 2,000 units of emergency housing by the end of 2022.</p> <p>The Regional Homelessness Authority had requested a budget increase in June of \$90 million on top of its funding last year that would pay for projects like vehicle safe lots and to increase wages for service providers, hire more staff, and build additional shelter and emergency housing</p> <p>CEO Marc Dones had said that request was to address “some pretty significant holes in current system architecture.” In a media briefing, they had also said it was unreasonable to expect the city to fund the entire additional \$90 million request in light of limited revenue streams.</p> <p>While the authority got some funding for those requests, Harrell’s proposal to cap inflation-tied wage increases for service providers has raised some alarm among the nonprofits who do the work, as well as some council members.</p> <p>A month ago, Harrell told police he was looking at a reduction in funding for the authority due to disagreements he and the agency had over the city’s practice of encampment removals. He immediately walked back those comments.</p>

Councilmember Andrew Lewis, a member of the authority’s governing committee, said that the mayor’s actions working with the Regional Homelessness Authority and City Council members did not reflect the comments he made to police, and this budget was another positive sign of collaboration.

Despite not receiving what Harrell called a “[wish list](#)” request when it was first submitted, authority officials thanked the mayor and county executive for their “substantial investments to respond to the humanitarian crisis of homelessness in our community.”

“In particular, we thank Mayor Harrell for the investment in Safe Lots for vehicle residents, and Executive Constantine for the investments in affordable housing,” the authority said in a statement.

The authority declined to specify what investments in affordable housing it was referring to.

City Councilmember Lisa Herbold, and authority governing committee member, said she had supported the agency’s \$90 million request because “it was merited by the critical needs.” She said the remainder of the authority’s request should be paid for by other cities in King County “who receive support and services from [King County Regional Homelessness Authority] but don’t yet provide them any funding.”

Harrell agreed.

“Other local governments can’t sit on the sidelines, and I’m not suggesting they are, but they need to be engaged in these solutions with us,” Harrell.

Constantine’s budget proposed \$48 million in county funding for the authority this year and \$41 million next year. Spokesperson Chase Gallagher said an error had the county reporting a higher figure in earlier reports.

It is unclear whether this is an overall increase, though.

Gallagher said the county’s 27% increase from \$38 million the previous year comes mostly from transferring the state-funded [Housing and Essential Needs](#) rental assistance program over to the authority.

The Regional Homelessness Authority said the county’s budget proposal showed the Housing and Essential Needs program would transfer \$28 million from the county to the authority. An authority spokesperson said she didn’t know if that meant that other programs the county funded last year would be cut as the agency was still analyzing the proposal.

The county did not provide a detailed look at what the money would fund.

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HEADLINE	09/29 More bird flu cases expected in the fall
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/uptick-in-bird-flu-cases-likely-this-fall-in-wa/
GIST	<p>The Washington State Department of Agriculture is warning the state to prepare for an uptick in bird flu cases this fall.</p> <p>Bird flu has already been responsible for millions of chicken and turkey deaths nationwide this year.</p> <p>Locally, 34 flocks have been infected and waterfowl at Seattle’s Green Lake and Volunteer parks have tested positive. Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium and Woodland Park Zoo have taken precautionary measures to protect their exotic birds and remove them from public view.</p> <p>Now, officials say that as the rainy season approaches, standing water and ponds that attract migrating wild birds will increase the risk of spreading bird flu.</p>

	<p>The biggest risk factor is direct contact with wild waterfowl. Officials recommend flock owners fence off their domestic birds, as well as eliminate outdoor feeders to prevent contact with wild birds.</p> <p>Bird owners should expect to continue taking these precautionary measures through the fall, according to Washington state veterinarian Amber Itle.</p> <p>“There is clear evidence that the virus did not re-assort to a less pathogenic form. That’s what we were hoping for, but it didn’t happen,” Itle said in a news release.</p> <p>In September, there have been additional detections of bird flu along the northern border indicating migrating birds will continue to spread the virus through fall, she said.</p> <p>Public Health – Seattle & King County recommends against people approaching or touching wild birds, especially if it appears ill or dead. Birds with the disease may be lethargic, have discharge at the nose and mouth or ruffled feathers.</p> <p>Individuals can report sick or dead birds online at bit.ly/sickwildbirds or by calling 360-902-2200, pressing 4, and leaving a voicemail.</p>
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HEADLINE	09/29 Bodies, plane crash wreckage recovered
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/most-of-whidbey-island-plane-crash-wreckage-recovered/
GIST	<p>The bodies of multiple victims of the deadly Labor Day weekend plane crash in Mutiny Bay have been recovered, along with most of the wreckage.</p> <p>Island County Emergency Management confirmed victims had been recovered, but Deputy Director Eric Brooks said Thursday afternoon that he wasn’t able to confirm the number found.</p> <p>About 80% of the plane, including the engine, has been recovered and pulled to the surface using remotely operated vessels, National Transportation Safety Board Chair Jennifer Homendy said Thursday. Homendy is among the crew on barges leading the recovery efforts that began Tuesday in a shipping channel off Whidbey Island.</p> <p>The plane was a de Havilland DHC-3 Otter, a regular in the Seattle area’s floatplane ecosystem, bound from Friday Harbor to Renton on Sept. 4 before plummeting into the water, causing a large splash and a loud boom.</p> <p>Onlookers and first responders in the immediate aftermath found only small pieces of debris, a few personal items and the body of 29-year-old Gabby Hanna, with no trace of the other nine people aboard the plane.</p> <p>“We are thankful for all those responsible for recovering the plane. This is a crucial step towards bringing closure to the families,” Alisa Brodowitz, an attorney at Schroeter Goldmark & Bender, said in a statement Thursday. The Seattle law firm is representing the families of Hanna and of a Medina couple, Ross Mickel, 47, and Lauren Hilty, 39, and their 22-month-old son, Remy, who are among the victims.</p> <p>“We all so hope that the recovery effort is successful and that everybody’s loved ones are recovered and the cause of this horrific crash is determined,” Hanna’s parents, David and Marcie von Beck, said in a statement. “We miss our dear Gabby every day, with all of our hearts. She was truly a shining star.”</p> <p>“Words cannot adequately convey the depth of our grief,” said a statement from Hilty’s family. Hilty was due to give birth to son Luca in mid-October. “The past three weeks have been absolute torture as we continue to anxiously await the retrieval of the plane and, more importantly, our loved ones. Our hope is this retrieval process is successful, but we know this is just the first step on our long, painful road ahead.”</p>

As of Thursday afternoon, Homendy said crews had found and were working to bring up one wing and several flight control pieces, including a horizontal stabilizer and both of the plane's control elevators. Crews have identified the propeller and the gear box and are looking for the ailerons, which control the roll of the plane.

As they look to recover the "four corners" of the airplane — the nose, the tail and both wings — Homendy said crews are pleased with the progress made in just over 48 hours of recovery, and would likely halt the operation in the next couple of days.

"The recovery operation for wreckage is going really well," Homendy said, noting that crews of between 20 and 23 people from NTSB, the Navy, Island County sheriff personnel and subcontractors have been working in 12-hour shifts around the clock since Tuesday.

Despite dozens of witnesses narrowing down the crash site, it took officials more than a week and multiple types of sonar to locate the plane because of the depth and current of the channel in Mutiny Bay. Recovery efforts began Tuesday, with remotely operated vehicles plunging more than 150 feet below the surface to retrieve the wreckage.

Homendy said the recovery is halted for some hours of the day due to powerful currents under the surface.

"There are hours where we can't have the ROV in the water because we can't move it forward," she said, noting crews have to wait for "slack tide," or a period when there is limited or no horizontal movement in the water, to resume efforts.

Once the recovery is complete, NTSB will lay out wreckage in a secure location and experts will begin combing through debris to find potential causes.

The process can take between 12 to 24 months, according to Homendy, as the NTSB assesses "man, machine and environment" to determine probable cause of the fatal crash.

In the meantime, she noted, the NTSB will share any potential urgent safety information with the Federal Aviation Administration, including if there is reason to be concerned about any part on the de Havilland Canada DHC-3 Otter.

"If we have a concern regarding the fleet, we're going to do something. We're not going to wait," Homendy said.

NTSB officials [released a preliminary report](#) that noted the plane had undergone a 100-hour inspection — a routine examination done every 100 flight hours — just three days before the incident and had completed a trip earlier the same day.

According to the report, inspections were completed in August and September of the control column lower assembly and elevator control tabs, as required by FAA airworthiness directives.

The FAA established the directive in 2004 for the elevator control tabs — small hinge mechanisms that contribute to the plane's elevator system, which helps a pilot control the plane's pitch, or the vertical movement of the nose. It came after reports that the control rod to the elevator servo-tab system could detach from the tab, causing the servo tab to "flutter" on DHC-3 Turbine Otter floatplanes with a turbine engine installed.

The fluttering servo tab [has been linked to multiple DHC-3 crashes](#).

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HEADLINE	09/29 Climate changed added 10% to Jan rainfall
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/nation-world/study-finds-that-climate-change-added-10-to-jans-rainfall/

GIST	<p>Climate change added at least 10% more rain to Hurricane Ian, a study prepared immediately after the storm shows.</p> <p>Thursday's research, which is not peer-reviewed, compared peak rainfall rates during the real storm to about 20 different computer scenarios of a model with Hurricane Ian's characteristics slamming into the Sunshine State in a world with no human-caused climate change.</p> <p>"The real storm was 10% wetter than the storm that might have been," said Lawrence Berkeley National Lab climate scientist Michael Wehner, study co-author.</p> <p>Forecasters predicted Ian will have dropped up to two feet (61 centimeters) of rain in parts of Florida by the time it stopped.</p> <p>Wehner and Kevin Reed, an atmospheric scientist at Stony Brook University, published a study in Nature Communications earlier this year looking at the hurricanes of 2020 and found during their rainiest three-hour periods they were more than 10% wetter than in a world without greenhouse gases trapping heat. Wehner and Reed applied the same scientifically accepted attribution technique to Hurricane Ian.</p> <p>A long-time rule of physics is that for every extra degree of warmth Celsius (1.8 degrees Fahrenheit), the air in the atmosphere can hold 7% more water. This week the Gulf of Mexico was 0.8 degrees warmer than normal, which should have meant about 5% more rain. Reality turned out to be even worse. The flash study found the hurricane dropped double that — 10% more rain.</p> <p>Ten percent may not sound like a lot, but 10% of 20 inches is two inches, which is a lot of rain, especially on top of the 20 inches that already fell, Reed said.</p> <p>Other studies have seen the same feedback mechanisms of stronger storms in warmer weather, said Princeton University atmospheric scientist Gabriel Vecchi, who wasn't part of the study.</p> <p>MIT hurricane researcher Kerry Emanuel said in general, a warmer world does make storms rainier. But he said he is uncomfortable drawing conclusions about individual storms.</p> <p>"This business above very very heavy rain is something we've expected to see because of climate change," he said. "We'll see more storms like Ian."</p> <p>Princeton's Vecchi said in an email that if the world is going to bounce back from disasters "we need to plan for wetter storms going forward, since global warming isn't going to go away."</p>
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HEADLINE	09/29 King Co. keeps buying homeless housing
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/homeless/king-county-wants-to-add-homeless-housing-while-many-buildings-are-still-empty/
GIST	<p>King County continues to buy hotels and apartment buildings, trying to meet a self-imposed goal of housing 1,600 homeless people. But it has yet to meet half of its occupancy target as five of its 10 properties remain vacant.</p> <p>Just months away from the new year, the county has used more than \$230 million from a sales tax passed in 2020 on properties in Seattle and five suburban cities as part of its Health Through Housing initiative. The county is in the final stages of buying a new, 35-unit apartment building in Seattle's Capitol Hill neighborhood.</p> <p>It's taken months — and sometimes more than a year — to open the properties the county already owns.</p> <p>As of Sept. 1, 357 people were living in four of the 10 Health Through Housing buildings purchased by King County. An additional 118 people are living in two apartment buildings in Seattle whose operations</p>

are funded by the county, but are owned by the city, totaling 475. A fifth building is being used to house refugees.

Some of these investments, such as the Capitol Hill building, are also intended to further county equity goals. If purchased, the apartments will house people who are queer, transgender, Black, Native, and other people of color. The sale is expected to be completed by early October.

“That’s within our initiative to annually reduce racial disproportionality within chronic homeless communities,” said Mario Williams-Sweet, a major initiatives manager for King County.

Although Black people are 7% of King County’s population, they represent one-quarter of the county’s homeless population, according to the [2022 Point-In-Time count](#). American Indian, Alaska Native and other Indigenous people make up 9% of the county’s homeless population, compared to 1% of the general population.

The county says it wants to have residents move in by the end of the year.

In the early months of the pandemic, the county capitalized on the havoc COVID wreaked on the travel industry. In October 2020, the county approved a 0.1% sales tax to take advantage of a hurting market and buy vacant hotels as well as new apartment buildings. County Executive Dow Constantine announced a plan to use them for permanent housing with social services attached for people who have been homeless for a long time and who have a disabling physical, mental or behavioral health condition, including substance-use disorder, that creates extra challenges around securing and maintaining stable housing.

In its first year, the county estimates the operational cost of the existing sites will be \$25,000 per unit. The sales tax, which is a permanent revenue source, funds the operations at every site. Some homeless hotel programs around the country have [had to close recently because they ran out of government funding](#), but Katie Rogers, spokesperson for the county’s Department of Community and Human Services, said the county’s tax revenue is designed to prevent that.

So far, the acquisition part of the plan has worked. After the Capitol Hill sale, the county still has to purchase at least two more sites, totaling 13 properties, Rogers said.

But moving people in has been harder.

At the beginning of the year, 180 people were living in two buildings. At the time, county officials pointed to [shortages in the homelessness workforce](#) for the delays. And not much has changed.

“There are not enough people doing this work. And there are not enough people who can afford to do this work. So we’ve got to take that head-on,” said Leo Flor, director of community and human services.

In addition, King County said subcontractors hired to make modifications to buildings have taken longer than expected and some locations have required more time to engage with community members over the new sites.

Some properties have been caught up in community or legal wrangling.

In March, King County [purchased its 10th property, in Kirkland](#), for \$28.7 million, near the Eastside Preparatory School.

Soon after, a group of parents and residents, called Keep Kids Safe, [sued the county and the city of Kirkland](#), saying they didn’t hold public meetings that were required before the property was purchased. Because of this, the lawsuit claimed, the 121-unit purchase should be voided.

The lawsuit spawned turmoil that lasted into August, and was ultimately dismissed.

	<p>In Renton, the City Council passed legislation that required the residents of a county-funded former Red Lion to move out, and placed regulations around where and how homeless shelters can operate.</p> <p>Since then, the county has returned to Renton, opening a Health Through Housing site in a former Extended Stay America. It creates permanent supportive housing for more than 100 people. At every former hotel, including the site in Renton, up to 60% of units will be available for homeless people in the city in which it is located.</p> <p>“It started off as a disagreement,” Flor said of the county’s efforts to house people in hotels in Renton, “and what it resulted in is what I think is going to be a perpetual partnership.”</p> <p>At most of the Health Through Housing sites, residents will get to stay indefinitely. But so far, three of the opened sites don’t meet the county’s “permanent supportive” housing status since they don’t have certain amenities, such as cooking units. These units are considered “emergency” housing.</p> <p>People living in emergency housing in Seattle can move into other permanent supportive housing sites around the county if they can secure a spot or they can live in their current home indefinitely. The county will eventually retrofit the sites with the necessary amenities to be brought up to permanent supportive housing status.</p> <p>The county says that four more Health Through Housing properties, totaling 318 units, will open by the end of the year. And that it expects two more to open by the end of March 2023.</p>
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HEADLINE	09/29 Unprepared for new infectious threats?
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/09/29/health/pandemic-preparedness-covid-monkeypox.html
GIST	<p>If it wasn’t clear enough during the COVID-19 pandemic, it has become obvious during the monkeypox outbreak: The United States, among the richest, most advanced nations in the world, remains wholly unprepared to combat new pathogens.</p> <p>The coronavirus was a sly, unexpected adversary. Monkeypox was a familiar foe, and tests, vaccines and treatments were already at hand. But the response to both threats sputtered and stumbled at every step.</p> <p>“It’s kind of like we’re seeing the tape replayed, except some of the excuses that we were relying on to rationalize what happened back in 2020 don’t apply here,” said Sam Scarpino, who leads pathogen surveillance at the Rockefeller Foundation’s Pandemic Prevention Institute.</p> <p>No single agency or administration is to blame, more than a dozen experts said in interviews, although the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has acknowledged that it bungled the response to the coronavirus.</p> <p>The price of failure is high. COVID has killed more than 1 million Americans so far, yielding untold misery. Cases, hospitalizations and deaths are all falling, but COVID was the third leading cause of death in the United States in 2021 and seems likely to keep killing Americans for years.</p> <p>Monkeypox is spreading more slowly now, and has never posed a challenge of COVID’s magnitude. But the United States has reported more monkeypox cases than any other country — 25,000, about 40% of the global total — and the virus is likely to persist as a constant, low-grade threat.</p> <p>Both outbreaks have revealed deep fissures in the nation’s framework for containing epidemics. Add to that plummeting public trust, rampant misinformation and deep schisms — between health officials and those treating patients, and between the federal government and states. A muddled response to future outbreaks seems almost inevitable.</p>

“We really are poorly, poorly prepared,” said Larry O. Gostin, director of the O’Neill Institute for National and Global Health Law at Georgetown University.

New infectious threats are certainly on the way, mostly because of the twin rises in global travel and vaccine hesitancy, and the growing proximity of people and animals. From 2012 to 2022, for example, Africa saw a 63% increase in outbreaks of pathogens that jump to people from animals, compared with the period from 2001 to 2011.

“In people’s minds, perhaps, is the idea that this COVID thing was such a freak of nature, was a once-in-a-century crisis, and we’re good for the next 99 years,” said Jennifer Nuzzo, director of the Pandemic Center at Brown University School of Public Health.

“This is the new normal,” she added. “It’s like the levees are built for the one-in-a-100-years crisis, but then the floods keep happening every three years.”

Chronic underfunding

Ideally, here’s how the national response to an outbreak might unspool: Reports from a clinic anywhere in the country would signal a new pathogen’s arrival. Alternatively, ongoing wastewater surveillance might sound the alarm for known threats, as it has recently for polio in New York state.

The information would flow from local health departments to state and federal authorities. Federal officials would rapidly permit and offer guidance for the development of tests, vaccines and treatments, rolling them out equitably to all residents.

Not one of these steps worked smoothly in the two recent outbreaks.

“I’m very familiar with outbreak response and pandemic preparedness, and none of it looks like this,” said Kristian Andersen, a virologist at the Scripps Research Institute in San Diego who has spent years studying epidemics.

Andersen said he had assumed that the flaws exposed by the coronavirus would be repaired as they became apparent. Instead, “we’re worse prepared now than we were early in the pandemic,” he said.

Public health in the United States has always operated on a shoestring. The data systems used by the CDC and other federal agencies are laughably out of date. Many public health workers were abused and attacked during the pandemic and have fled their jobs, or are planning to.

More money won’t solve all the problems, several experts said. But additional funding could help public health departments hire and train staff, update their aging data systems and invest in robust surveillance networks.

But in Congress, pandemic preparedness remains a tough sell.

President Joe Biden’s budget request for fiscal year 2023 includes \$88 billion over five years, but Congress has not shown any inclination to approve it.

The United States spends between 300 to 500 times more on its military defense than on its health systems, and yet “no war has killed a million Americans,” noted Dr. Thomas R. Frieden, who led the CDC under former President Barack Obama.

Renewed urgency

The United States was supposed to be the very best at managing outbreaks. An assessment of global health security in 2019, a year before the arrival of the coronavirus, ranked the nation first among all others — best at preventing and detecting outbreaks, most adept at communicating risk and second only to the United Kingdom in the rapidity of its response.

But all of that assumed that leaders would move quickly and decisively when faced with a new pathogen, and that the public would follow instructions. The analyses did not account for an administration that underplayed and politicized every aspect of the COVID response, from testing and masks to the use of vaccines.

Too often in a crisis, government officials look for easy solutions, with dramatic and immediate impact. But there are none for managing pandemics.

“A pandemic is by definition a problem from hell. You’re vanishingly unlikely to be able to remove all of its negative consequences,” said Bill Hanage, an epidemiologist at the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health.

Instead, he added, officials should bet on combinations of imperfect strategies, with an emphasis on speed over accuracy. In both the coronavirus pandemic and the monkeypox outbreak, for example, the CDC at first tried to maintain control over testing, instead of disseminating the responsibility as widely as possible. The move led to limited testing, and left health officials blind to the spread of the viruses.

The Food and Drug Administration was slow to help academic labs develop alternatives for testing, and encouraged the highest quality of diagnosis. It may be reasonable for officials to ask which test is faster or which one produces the least errors, Hanage said, but “all of them are better than not doing anything.”

Gostin, of Georgetown University, has worked with the CDC for most of his career, and was among its staunchest defenders early in the pandemic.

But he became increasingly disenchanted as the United States was forced to rely on other countries for vital information: How effective are boosters? Is the virus airborne? Do masks work?

“Virtually in every case, we got our information and acted on it from foreign health agencies, from the U.K., from Israel, from South Africa,” Gostin said. The CDC “always seemed to be last and weakest,” he said.

Many at the CDC and other health agencies seemed to be paralyzed, fearful of being held accountable if things go wrong, he added: “They’re covering their rear ends trying to follow the procedure. It all boils down to a lack of fire in their bellies.”

Divided responsibilities

The most intractable hurdle to a coordinated national response arises from the division of responsibility and resources between federal, state and local governments, along with gaps in communications between the public health officials coordinating the response and the doctors and nurses actually treating the patients.

The complex laws that govern health care in the United States are designed to protect confidentiality and patient rights. “But they are not optimized for working with the public health system and getting the public health system the data that it needs,” said Dr. Jay Varma, director of the Cornell Center for Pandemic Prevention and Response.

Generally, states are not obligated to share health data, such as the number of cases of infection or demographic details of vaccinated people, with federal authorities.

Some state laws actually forbid officials from sharing the information. Smaller states like Alaska may not want to hand over details that leave patients identifiable. Hospitals in small jurisdictions are often reluctant to surrender patient data for similar reasons.

Health care systems in countries like Britain and Israel rely on nationalized systems that make it much easier to collect and analyze information on cases, said Dr. Anthony Fauci, the Biden administration’s top medical adviser.

“Our system isn’t interconnected like that,” Fauci said. “It isn’t uniform — it’s a patchwork.” A CDC official said the agency understood the perspective of the states, but the current rules on data sharing created “constraints and hurdles.”

“I don’t think it’s a matter of scapegoating states,” Kevin Griffis, a spokesman for the agency, said. “It’s simply a statement of the fact that we don’t have access to the information that we need to optimize a response.”

Legislation introduced in Congress might help remove those barriers, he added. The measure would require health care providers, pharmacies, and state and local health departments to report health data to the CDC.

Epidemics are managed by public health agencies, but it is clinicians — doctors, nurses and others — who diagnose and care for patients. An efficient outbreak response relies on mutual understanding and exchange of information between the two groups.

The sides did not communicate effectively in either the COVID pandemic or the monkeypox outbreak. The disconnect has led to absurdly convoluted procedures.

The CDC has not yet included monkeypox in its disease reporting computer system, for example. That means state officials must manually type in data from case reports, instead of simply uploading the files. A request for testing must often be faxed to the state laboratory; the results are often routed through a state epidemiologist, then to the provider, then to the patient.

Few public health officials understand how health care is delivered on the ground, some experts said. “Most people in the CDC don’t know what the inside of a hospital looks like,” said Dr. James Lawler, co-director of the University of Nebraska’s Global Center for Health Security.

Frieden, who once led New York City’s health department, suggested that embedding CDC staff into local health departments might help officials understand the obstacles involved in responding to an outbreak.

Frieden has also proposed what he calls a “7-1-7” accountability metric, loosely modeled on a strategy employed to address the HIV epidemic. Every new disease should be identified within seven days of emergence, reported to public health authorities within one day and responded to within seven days.

The strategy may give the government a clearer sense of the problems impeding the response, he said.

In the United States, “what we have is repeated cycles of panic and neglect,” Frieden said. “The single most important thing we have to do is break that cycle.”

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HEADLINE	09/29 ‘First of kind’ program: diapers to families
SOURCE	https://www.king5.com/article/news/local/federal-program-free-diapers-washington-state/281-f135b1e4-fd7b-4d36-84c7-d2e3fc3f218d
GIST	<p>SEATTLE — A new federal pilot program aims to help provide diapers to thousands of families in need.</p> <p>WA Senator Patty Murray's Office says the program will distribute \$800,000 to the Washington State Community Action Partnership and \$1.2 million to the South Puget Intertribal Planning Agency. Each will coordinate the allocation of diapers and diapering supplies to a number of community organizations.</p> <p>One of those organizations is Westside Baby, a diaper bank in Seattle that also helps with other needs, such as clothing and car seats.</p>

	<p>"This investment is just going to allow us to serve more children and more babies, and it's also testimony to the fact that diaper need exists in our community and it's not something that we can just not talk about," Westside Baby Director of Development and Communications Carina Schubert said.</p> <p>Schubert says Westside Baby serves about 30,000 children every year in King County, but that the number of families who struggle to meet basic needs has significantly outpaced the growth of available resources.</p> <p>"Based on the most recently available census data, childhood poverty rates are increasing and are disproportionately in south King County cities, in comparison to county-wide data," Schubert said.</p> <p>Westside Baby says there are 13,000 children under the age of five in King County who live below the federal poverty level.</p> <p>"It would take about 48 million diapers per year just to meet the need for children living in the deepest poverty, not to mention the thousands upon thousands more families who can't make a living wage," Schubert said.</p> <p>Westside Baby says it is still waiting to learn how much of the allocation it will receive, but that any amount helps and it hopes programs like this continue and expand.</p> <p>"This is the first of its kind federal investment in diaper banks," Schubert said. "A larger investment in public funding is going to allow us to meet more of the need."</p> <p>The program will be administered through the Department of Health and Human Services, included in last year's government funding bill.</p> <p>"Every single day, I work hard to lift stress off parents' shoulders—because no parent should be worried about getting diapers for their child," Senator Patty Murray wrote in a statement. "But right now, as any parent will tell you, diapers can be a huge cost—and one in three families with a child who needs diapers, struggles to afford them."</p> <p>The Diaper Distribution Pilot Program for Families in Need will provide funding to states and community organizations to help provide diapers to families with low incomes.</p> <p>"Moms, parents, and babies deserve better, that's why I fought for this critical program to support diaper banks and get diapers to families that need them," Senator Murray said. "I'm proud to see that two of the pilot programs will launch in Washington state, and will provide diapers to families from Pasco to Seattle, including to Tribal communities in the south Puget Sound."</p>
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HEADLINE	09/30 Annexing territory Russia can't control
SOURCE	https://www.cnn.com/2022/09/30/europe/ukraine-offensive-sviatogirsk-intl/index.html
GIST	<p>Sviatogirsk, UkraineCNN — It is a road through scorched forest, open roofs and pockmarked asphalt where the devastation appears to seamlessly meld together into an endless line.</p> <p>Ukraine's push south from Kharkiv to Donetsk has been less advertised and heralded than its rout of Russian troops around the city of Kharkiv. But from a two-hour drive south to the monastery town of Sviatogirsk, it appears this military operation may be just as decisive.</p> <p>Village after village, swept clear of Russian forces, with torn and rusting armor mixed with freshly smoldering tanks, line the country roads. The extent of the firepower employed by both sides, and also the accuracy of Ukraine's newer Western-supplied weapons, is clear from the ghostly silence in so many tiny settlements.</p>

Access to this fast-advancing front line was provided to CNN by Ukraine in a likely bid to display the gains Ukrainian forces have slowly made in this lower-profile offensive, which has been underway since the city of Iziun fell earlier this month.

The ultimate goal is the city of Lyman, a railway hub whose outsized significance seems due to Russia's staunch defense of the town, but also the significant advantage seizing the town would give Ukraine in its bid to retake the rest of the Luhansk region, coveted by Russia and partially occupied since 2014.

A separate push appears underway by Ukrainian forces slightly further northeast, towards the town of Svatove, and its south, pressuring the town of Rubizhne, which is also vital to Russia's hold on Luhansk. Some analysts suggest Kyiv may be looking to provoke a similar domino effect to that which caused Russian forces around Kharkiv to collapse. Some ambitions rest on Lyman's encirclement cascading and causing a Russian retreat from towns behind this logistical hub.

A Ukrainian soldier sent CNN video Thursday of abandoned Russian positions from Lypove and Zelena Dolyna, which would show swift progress towards the town of Torske, to Lyman's east. In short, incremental gains by Ukraine's forces are beginning to alter the specter of continued Russian control in Luhansk. This change comes in the hours before Russian President Vladimir Putin is [expected to sign a decree](#) formally and falsely declaring the occupied regions of Luhansk, Donetsk, Zaporizhzhia and Kherson as part of Russia.

In the town of Sviatohirsk, the challenge of Moscow annexing territory that Russian forces are slowly losing control of is laid bare. The quiet pines of the forests around its Cave Monastery are now blighted by the sheer force of the violence inflicted on this peaceful resort town. Holiday camps and hotels were seized and occupied by Russian forces and then used to house liberating Ukrainian troops.

It has the look of a town that will struggle to ever be itself again.

Walking down the center of an empty, central street, weeping, and clutching pine branches that will later burn to heat her tea, is 73-year-old Anna. It is the town's most fragile who were left behind, it seems. Sobbing, she explains only nine people remain in her apartment block, and she nearly did not make it.

"The scariest moment was when the Russians one night were in a firefight in my courtyard," she said. "I was in the doorway, and tried to hold the steel door shut. But a soldier pulled at the door, so I jumped down and fell into the basement. He tore open the door, shot his gun into the darkness and missed me."

Close by, outside a ravaged post office, is Lyuba, who is hard of hearing, but incensed by the mess that the Russian occupiers have made of the new building.

She wears on her shirt a lock of hair, caught in a plastic zip-lock bag on a safety pin. It is from a local priest, beloved to her, who was killed by shelling in June. "I just attached it as a protective amulet," said Lyuba.

Then, in a panic, she asked: "Do you think they will come back? Tell me, can I leave here now?"

Across the street is the local administration building, hit powerfully with a single rocket. Yet on its walls remain the dark graffiti of Russia's occupying force.

"Forgive us," reads one comment. Another wall bears the phrase "Rostov is Dad, Odessa Mum" in red spray paint – hinting at the shared history and parentage of many Russians with Ukraine.

Ukrainian soldier Dmytro, from the Kulchitskiy Battalion, who took part in the counteroffensive to liberate Sviatohirsk, said they watched the Russians a long time before attacking.

“You have to understand the psychology of someone who comes to a foreign land,” he said. “His mass media and his commander may tell him foolish idea, but when he gets here, he realizes he is really in alien territory.”

Locals stagger around the carnage of the town. It is hard to find a single building that is intact, or has any chance of providing shelter in the coming winter. Even the town’s second monastery is pockmarked by shellfire.

Yet in its cold, dark but orderly basement, dozens hid during the worst fighting and a handful still find shelter. The steps outside the church are scattered with ordinary signs of family life distant to the shell-damaged cross and damaged dome nearby: a doll and laundry on a clothesline, a kettle slowly boiling on a stone stove.

Inside the basement is Lyudmila. Just two days earlier, she was brought to tears by a sound that had comforted the forests here for centuries – the church bells.

“It rang, and I heard it, and I listened and it got louder,” she said. She has spent seven months in this shelter under harrowing uncertainty. Her disabled son was injured by shelling at the start of the war, and she now does not know where he is.

“The last time I saw him he was alive” she said, adding he was taken to hospital.

Another woman, Valeria, sits in the dark corner of the basement, in a chamber that used to hold eight people but is now hers alone.

“My children have left, been evacuated, and my apartment is destroyed,” she said. “Is it possible to leave here now?”

Outside, the shelling continues, as Ukraine seeks to reduce the territory Moscow will falsely claim as part of Russian in the days ahead, a land shredded by Russia’s war of choice.

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HEADLINE	09/29 CDC: severe illnesses from monkeypox
SOURCE	https://www.cnn.com/2022/09/29/health/ohio-monkeypox-death-cdc/index.html
GIST	<p>The US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention issued a new warning to health care providers Thursday about severe illnesses in people with monkeypox.</p> <p>The alert comes as Ohio reported that an individual with monkeypox has died – the third known death of a patient with monkeypox in the United States.</p> <p>Ohio listed the death in an update to its online monkeypox outbreak dashboard. No further details were provided, including whether the death was caused by the virus itself or whether other conditions may have contributed.</p> <p>“CDC is aware of a reported death of an individual who had severe illnesses and tested positive for monkeypox in Ohio,” Kathleen Conley, a spokesperson for the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, told CNN on Thursday. CNN has reached out to the Ohio Department of Health for more information.</p> <p>The first US death due to monkeypox was confirmed this month in Los Angeles County. The county public health department and the CDC said the person had a severely weakened immune system and had been hospitalized. No further information will be made public, the department said.</p> <p>A person in Harris County, Texas, who had monkeypox died in August, but the virus’ role in that death has not been confirmed.</p>

Deaths from monkeypox are extremely rare, and babies, pregnant women and people with weakened immune systems are at greater risk. Among more than 67,000 cases reported globally in the current outbreak, there have been 27 deaths, according to the World Health Organization.

More than 25,000 cases of monkeypox have been reported in the United States, but recent case trends suggest that the outbreak is slowing in the US.

Falling case numbers might be a reflection of rising numbers of people vaccinated against the virus. This week, the CDC announced that it's expanding eligibility for the Jynneos monkeypox vaccine to higher-risk people who have not been exposed to the virus.

According to data posted by the CDC on Wednesday, men at high risk for monkeypox because they have sex with other men or because they live with HIV were 14 times more likely to be infected if they were unvaccinated compared with those who were at least two weeks past their first dose of the vaccine.

CDC warns of 'severe manifestations' of monkeypox

The CDC said Thursday that some people in the US who were infected with monkeypox during the ongoing outbreak have had "severe manifestations" of the illness, extended hospitalizations or "substantial" health problems.

The agency's [health alert](#) notes that severe monkeypox can happen in anyone, and most people diagnosed during this outbreak have had mild or moderate illness. Most people whose illness has been severe have had HIV with "substantial immunosuppression," it says.

Some of the severe illnesses have included:

- Coalescing or necrotic lesions requiring extensive surgical care or amputation of an extremity
- Lesions in sensitive areas like the mouth, urethra, rectum or vagina that cause severe pain and affect daily activities
- Bowel lesions with significant swelling, leading to obstruction
- Lesions causing scarring with "significant" effects in areas like the genitals, bowels or face
- Involvement of multiple organ systems and associated conditions, such as encephalitis, myocarditis, conjunctivitis and corneal ulcerations

The advisory urges health-care providers to be aware of risk factors for severe monkeypox and says anyone with suspected or confirmed monkeypox should be tested for HIV. Providers should also check whether the person's immune system may be weakened by another condition or by a medication.

Monkeypox treatment in people who have weakened immune systems should involve stopping any medications that may be affecting the immune system, providing antiretroviral therapy for those with HIV, and possibly using medications such as tecovirimat, known as Tpoxx.

The CDC says people who were exposed to monkeypox through sexual contact should get tested for HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases.

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HEADLINE	09/29 Analysis: Durkan's texts manually deleted
SOURCE	https://www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/seattle-mayor-deleted-texts-lawsuit-rcna49986
GIST	<p>SEATTLE — A newly disclosed forensic analysis has found that 191 texts were manually deleted from an iPhone of former Mayor Jenny Durkan in the months after her administration's controversial response to racial justice protests in June 2020, according to the latest filings in a federal lawsuit.</p> <p>The previously unknown manual text deletions from Durkan's phone — along with other new details, including that "factory resets" were performed on phones of six other city officials in fall 2020, resulting</p>

in the deletions of thousands of other text messages — are among the revelations contained in the findings of an expert's [32-page report](#) completed in April.

The expert's report, along with a host of other exhibits, was filed in U.S. District Court in Seattle late Wednesday to bolster new arguments raised by attorneys for several businesses and residents suing the city for damages they say were caused by Seattle's weekslong tolerance of a sprawling protest zone two years ago.

In an [accompanying motion](#), attorney Angelo Calfo seeks a default judgment and sanctions against the city, contending Seattle officials intentionally destroyed potential evidence after the plaintiffs filed their lawsuit, which Calfo said could have helped prove the plaintiffs' case.

The motion alleges Durkan, former Police Chief Carmen Best, Fire Chief Harold Scoggins and several other Seattle officials intentionally deleted thousands of text messages "well after this case began and in blatant disregard of their duties as public officials to preserve their texts."

"The City's explanation for ... why the officials deleted the texts—using factory resets, 30-day auto deletions, and manual deletions—are either non-existent or incredible," Calfo's motion states. "There's only one plausible explanation. These officials intended to deprive Plaintiffs of crucial evidence, prejudicing Plaintiffs' case and rendering the City's defenses difficult to rebut."

Seattle City Attorney Ann Davison's office, which is defending the city, declined comment about the latest filings Thursday, but countered by filing the city's own [motion for sanctions](#) against the plaintiffs, including business owners, landlords and residents, for allegedly destroying evidence.

It claims at least two of the plaintiffs "deliberately, manually deleted their text messages about" the protest zone after the lawsuit was filed, "when they knew they were obligated not to do so, and have done nothing to retrieve them." Several other plaintiffs used an encrypted messaging app with "disappearing" messages to discuss the protests, the city's motion states.

Durkan, a former U.S. Attorney who did not seek re-election after her single term as Seattle's mayor ended last year, said through a spokesperson's statement Thursday most of her texts, which were "mostly innocuous and irrelevant," were recovered. The statement said she believes "strongly in the public's right to know what their government is doing."

"The lawyers' motion is a purposely inaccurate and misplaced 'Hail Mary' attempt to save a case that lacks merit," the spokesperson said.

Durkan previously has denied intentionally deleting any of her text messages or changing any phone retention settings to automatically delete them.

The city recovered or recreated many texts, but those exchanged among key decision-makers during the height of the protests have been lost.

Best, who abruptly retired as chief in the wake of the 2020 protests, did not return phone and email messages. Best initially told reporters she didn't know how her texts were lost, but testified in a deposition for another case in May that she periodically deleted her texts in bulk after deciding they didn't contain significant information requiring them to be saved.

The filings are the latest developments in a festering city scandal that has already spawned an ongoing probe by the King County Sheriff's Office into whether any current or former city officials broke laws. The dates of the city's missing texts overlap with a several-week span in June 2020, when widespread protests erupted in Seattle over the murder of George Floyd by police in Minneapolis.

During that time, riot gear-clad Seattle officers used tear gas and violence to quell demonstrations before police ultimately abandoned a precinct station and the city allowed protesters to occupy six square blocks

of Capitol Hill for more than three weeks. Several shootings, two of them fatal, and other violence and property crimes were reported within the free-protest zone before the city disbanded it.

The public first learned about Durkan's deleted texts in May 2021 — after a public records' officer's whistleblower complaint prompted an [ethics investigation](#) that found the city broke the state records law. By then, several lawsuits related to the city's handling of the protests, and dozens of public records requests seeking city officials' communications from the time, had been filed.

Under public records law and legal evidence rules, the texts should have been preserved. Anyone who willfully destroys a public record that's supposed to be kept is guilty of a felony punishable by up to five years in prison and a \$1,000 fine, according to [Washington law](#).

For months, city, county and state officials sidestepped calling for a criminal probe before King County Prosecuting Attorney Dan Satterberg referred the matter to the county's sheriff's office three months ago. That investigation remains ongoing.

Last year, the city hired its own expert — Kevin Faulkner of the cybersecurity firm Unit 42 — to perform a forensic analysis and try to recover Durkan and Best's missing texts.

When it was ultimately released in February, the [long-overdue report](#) had cost the city nearly \$500,000 but didn't recover any of their missing texts or answer several seemingly key questions about how they were deleted.

The city's report found that thousands of Durkan's text messages likely vanished because her phone settings were manually changed to automatically delete texts older than 30 days and to "disable and delete" an automatic backup storing texts in the cloud.

The phone setting changes occurred in early July 2020, around the time Durkan has said she inadvertently dropped her phone into salt water and the city's IT department issued her a replacement phone, the report said.

But the city's report didn't determine who manually changed the settings that deleted the mayor's texts, nor did it analyze how the texts of several other city officials — other than Best's texts — disappeared. The city's report also didn't mention finding evidence that texts were manually deleted from Durkan's phones.

The report from the plaintiffs' digital forensics expert, Brandon Leatha, says it found evidence that, aside from the 30-day automatic deletions of 5,746 texts from the mayor's phone, "an additional 191 messages were manually deleted between June 25, 2020, and November 16, 2020."

Leatha's report also states that more than 29,000 of Best's texts were manually and automatically deleted from her phone and weren't backed up, and that the phones of five other city officials — Scoggins, chief police strategy officer Chris Fisher, assistant police chief Eric Greening, city utilities official Idris Beauregard and Emergency Operations Center head Kenneth Neafcy — each had factory resets performed sometime from Oct. 8, 2020 to Nov. 3, 2020.

Leatha's analysis said the city reported that the resets, which deleted thousands more texts, were done because the officials had forgotten passwords or otherwise locked themselves out of their devices.

"The 'coincidence' of so many custodians losing passwords, resetting phones, and erasing iCloud backups is incredible," the plaintiffs' new motion states. "The changing stories, spotty memories, undisclosed manual deletions, and IT deviations from normal practice make intent even clearer."

Calfo's motion also asserts — based on Leatha's findings, deposition testimony and other evidence — that Durkan reset her first phone and restored it with an old backup before turning it over to city IT personnel for a replacement in early July 2020.

	<p>Leatha's report indicates most of the city's texts were deleted after plaintiffs' attorneys warned the city to preserve evidence for the lawsuit. It also said the texts could have been recovered had the city taken action to preserve phone data sooner than it did.</p> <p>In a phone interview, Leatha told NBC News he based his analysis on the same data the city's expert used for its report.</p> <p>Faulkner testified in a deposition earlier this year that manual deletions from the former mayor's phone "wasn't something I was asked to look into and opine on" for the city's report, according to a transcript also filed Wednesday by the plaintiffs' lawyers.</p>
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HEADLINE	09/30 Suicide rates rise after brief 2yr decline
SOURCE	https://www.nbcnews.com/health/health-news/2-year-decline-suicide-rates-rise-rcna49766
GIST	<p>The number of people who died by suicide rose from 2020 to 2021 following a brief period of decline, according to provisional data released Friday from the National Center for Health Statistics.</p> <p>It's a sign, experts say, that suicide rates are inching back up to levels seen before the pandemic.</p> <p>In 2021, 47,646 people in the United States died by suicide, up from 45,979 in 2020. That's an increase of nearly 4%.</p> <p>There had been hope among experts that suicide rates had perhaps peaked in 2018, after steadily rising for nearly two decades. Numbers fell slightly in both 2019 and 2020.</p> <p>The reasons for those declines are unclear, said Julie Cerel, director of the Suicide Prevention and Exposure Lab at the University of Kentucky.</p> <p>"In 2019, something changed," she said. "We'll never know if it's because we were doing something right or not."</p> <p>Despite the stresses associated with the pandemic, suicide rates did not increase in 2020. Cerel said she was not surprised.</p> <p>"People were looking after each other" early on in the pandemic, she said. Families were also largely gathered together in their homes, working and studying remotely. People tend to die by suicide when others aren't around, Cerel said.</p> <p>The 2021 increases may reflect, in part, a return to normalcy.</p> <p>The report found that males ages 15 to 24 continue to be at higher risk than other groups. In 2021, there were 24.1 suicides per 100,000 people in this group, up from 22.4 per 100,000 in 2020, an increase of 8%.</p> <p>The higher rates among younger men may be because they are more likely to engage in high risk-taking behaviors and tend to have greater access to the most lethal means in terms of suicide attempts, said Michael Lindsey, dean of the New York University Silver School of Social Work. Lindsey's research focuses on preventing suicides in young people, especially Black youth.</p> <p>The new report did not provide a racial and ethnic breakdown of recent suicides. However, previous research has indicated a worrisome rise among young Black men.</p> <p>Suicide rates also increased for men ages 24 through 44, as well as 65 through 74.</p>

	<p>While men have historically been more likely to die by suicide than women, the report zeroed in on another alarming trend: suicides in middle school-age girls.</p> <p>In 2020, 204 girls ages 10 to 14 died by suicide. In 2021, that number rose to 237 — an increase of 16%. The overall numbers are so low in this age group, however, that they're not considered statistically significant.</p> <p>"We can't jump to any conclusions," Cerel said. "But we need to be looking out for younger girls, as well." Lindsey said all of the increases cited in the new report reflect a demand for more mental health professionals to address the growing problem.</p> <p>"There's not the requisite numbers of providers to be able to meet the sheer need," he said.</p>
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HEADLINE	09/30 Heavy gunfire in Burkina Faso capital
SOURCE	https://www.reuters.com/world/africa/heavy-gunfire-heard-burkina-faso-capital-reuters-witnesses-2022-09-30/
GIST	<p>OUAGADOUGOU, Sept 30 (Reuters) - Heavy gunfire rang out from the main military camp and some residential areas of Burkina Faso's capital on Friday and a large blast was heard near the presidential palace, Reuters reporters said.</p> <p>Soldiers took up positions along the avenue leading to the presidency and blocked access to administrative buildings and the national television, which had stopped broadcasting, the Reuters said.</p> <p>A government spokesman could not be reached.</p> <p>It was not clear yet if this was a coup attempt but it bore the hallmarks of other power grabs that have swept across West and Central Africa over the past two years.</p> <p>A military junta led by Colonel Paul-Henri Sandaogo Damiba took power Burkina Faso in a coup on Jan. 24.</p> <p>That takeover was largely celebrated by civilians fed up with former President Roch Kabore's civilian government that was unable to rein in Islamist militants who have killed thousands of civilians in recent years and taken over large parts of the north and east.</p> <p>In his first statement after the January coup, Damiba, often seen in public in military fatigues and aviator sunglasses, pledged to restore security.</p> <p>But attacks in the impoverished West African country have worsened and the army is in disarray. The rank and file, which gave Damiba their support in January, have grown frustrated at the lack of progress, security sources say.</p> <p>This week, unknown assailants killed 11 soldiers in an attack on a 150-vehicle convoy taking supplies to a town in northern Burkina Faso. Fifty civilians are missing. read more</p> <p>Militants have blockaded areas of the north, leaving communities stranded. Government convoys and air drops deliver essential goods to trapped civilians.</p> <p>Meanwhile, many cities and towns not under siege have seen their populations swell as people flee violence in the countryside. Health systems are stretched. Drought has led to high levels of malnutrition.</p> <p>Protests against the military have cropped up in cities across Burkina Faso this week.</p>

	<p>Much of the country has become ungovernable since 2018. Millions have fled their homes, fearing further raids by gunmen who frequently descend on rural communities on motorbikes. Thousands have been killed in attacks.</p> <p>Burkina Faso has become the epicentre of the violence that began in neighbouring Mali in 2012 but which has since spread across the arid expanse of the Sahel region south of the Sahara Desert.</p> <p>As well as Burkina Faso, Mali, Chad, and Guinea have all seen coups since 2020, raising fears about a backslide towards military rule in a region that has made democratic progress in recent decades.</p>
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HEADLINE	09/29 Ian's Florida economic toll: \$60-70B
SOURCE	https://www.cbsnews.com/news/hurricane-ian-tropical-storm-citrus-mining-tourism-economic-impact/
GIST	<p>Hurricane Ian will have a potentially devastating impact on the state's major industries, with the economic toll from the storm expected to reach tens of billions of dollars.</p> <p>The state's tourism and hospitality, citrus production, and phosphate mining businesses are likely to face weeks-long disruptions to their operations, according to experts.</p> <p>The storm, which made landfall in Florida Wednesday as a Category 4 storm, is projected to deliver an \$8 billion blow to the tourism sector alone, reflecting about 10% of the state's total tourism revenue. That figure reflects temporary theme park and hotel closures as well as reduced tourism. For example, ahead of the storm Disney announced its theme parks would close for at least two days and some of its hotels would temporarily shut down.</p> <p>"With respect to specific industries in Florida, you think of tourism and hospitality and that's likely to take two levels of hits," Chuck Watson, founder of Enki Research, which uses computer modeling to calculate the impact of natural disasters, told CBS MoneyWatch. "There is the physical damage and the disruption from people cancelling travel plans."</p> <p>The only silver lining is that it's not peak tourism season, Watson noted.</p> <p>"At least it is the off-season in between summer when people go to Florida and snowbird season, which hasn't quite started yet. It's fortunate from that standpoint. They have time to rebuild and recover because you get more tourism around Thanksgiving and Christmas," he said.</p> <p>Watson expects between \$60 billion and \$70 billion in total economic losses related to Ian, which would rank it among the most destructive storms ever to hit the U.S. By comparison, Hurricane Irma in 2017 caused estimated damage of \$50 billion, making it the most expensive storm in Florida history, according to Reuters. Katrina, which slammed Louisiana and other states in 2005, was the costliest hurricane in U.S. history, with estimated losses of at least \$125 billion.</p> <p>Ian is expected to regain strength and become a hurricane again on Thursday evening. The storm has left Florida and is forecast to hit South Carolina, where a hurricane warning was issued for the entire coast. "Agriculture, particularly orange groves, could take a big hit since we are right before harvest and it is the worst time to have high winds," Watson said.</p> <p>Roughly two-thirds of the state's orange groves weathered hurricane-force winds.</p> <p>"It is one thing to lose this year's crop, but if you damage the trees that's a multiyear problem," Watson said.</p> <p>The storm also appears to have caused billions of dollars in physical damage to residential and commercial real estate properties. It remains unclear how much it will cost to rebuild structures that are damaged or destroyed given, with longer term expenditures contingent on future economic conditions.</p>

"In the current macroeconomy, things like home values and construction pricing are really in flux. When trying to figure out the cost of recovery, that's forward-looking. So you have to take into account interest rates for reconstruction loans and other variables," Watson said.

Oil and gas production unscathed

Oil producers BP and Chevron preemptively [halted production](#) at offshore oil platforms in the Gulf of Mexico in anticipation of Ian, but the state's oil and gas fields were spared.

"The impact should be extremely transitory because the storm didn't go through any of the oil or gas fields," Watson said. "They did precautionary shutdowns, but in a couple days they will be restoring flows. I don't imagine this would be even a blip on the radar as far as actual production nationally," Watson said.

The bulk of U.S. gas production is located in Texas and Louisiana, while Florida has no refineries, according to Raymond James energy analyst Pavel Molchanov.

"Ian did a lot of damage in the state of Florida, but the oil and gas installations are way to the west of the path of Ian specifically," Molchanov told CBS MoneyWatch. "The hurricanes that disrupted the oil and gas industry in a serious way made landfall in Texas or Louisiana and caused flooding around refineries."

Job losses

For employees in Florida, damaged or destroyed businesses could mean significant job losses.

"When we looked at the history of hurricanes and how the economy was affected, you see a pretty clear pattern of loss of jobs as businesses are shut down because of the weather or because they've suffered damage from storms," said Sean Snaith, national economist and director of University of Central Florida's Institute for Economic Forecasting.

On the flip side, after natural disasters employment in the construction industry tends to spike as properties require rebuilding.

"One big myth, though, is that somehow it's good for the economy," Snaith said. "But you don't grow your economy by destroying. All these businesses that were damaged and shut down, all these homes that aren't inhabitable aren't producing any goods and services — they aren't providing any shelter."

"Certainly there will be a flurry of activity to repair and rebuild," he added. "But in the meantime, those affected businesses aren't producing anything."

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HEADLINE	09/30 Ukraine: Russia 'Trojan horse' deserters
SOURCE	https://www.thedailybeast.com/ukraine-ambassador-sergiy-kyslytsya-warns-russian-deserters-are-kremlins-trojan-horsemen?ref=home
GIST	<p>Ukraine's Permanent Representative to the United Nations warned Thursday he is concerned that some men fleeing Russia to ostensibly avoid conscription might actually be Kremlin "Trojan horses" meant to wreak havoc later.</p> <p>"While genuine members of opposition should be considered for temporary protection in Europe and elsewhere, the army of Trojan horsemen of would-be Russian soldiers in Europe may pose a security threat, especially to neighboring countries and beyond," the ambassador, Sergiy Kyslytsya, said.</p> <p>"Why should we turn a blind eye to the high probability that hundreds of thousands of conscript-refugees now infiltrating Europe [are] the same people who remained loyal & obedient to [P]utin till the very last moment," Kyslytsya said Thursday.</p>

The accusation exposes the deep divisions among [European leaders](#) about how to treat Russian citizens fleeing Russia now that Russian President Vladimir Putin has announced a “partial mobilization” for the war in Ukraine. While some experts suggest sympathy should be extended to citizens who disagree with Putin’s war, doubts have grown about whether Russians fleeing now are truly opposed to the war, or whether they just don’t want to go to war themselves.

Russian men have been fleeing the country in the tens of thousands ever since Putin made the announcement earlier this month that [300,000 men](#) would be headed to fight in Ukraine. And although the orders are meant for those with military backgrounds, panic appears to have set in that the Kremlin may loosen and expand that eligibility. In some cases, Russian men are being sent [without any training](#) to the front, according to a human rights group accounting of the mobilization, which Ukraine’s president Volodymyr Zelensky has said makes the mobilization, in essence, a death sentence.

So far, Russia’s Federal Security Services (FSB) claims that approximately 260,000 Russian men have fled the country, according to [Novaya Gazeta](#).

While Ukraine’s UN envoy appears concerned that fleeing Russians may harbor sympathies for the war and may one day be leveraged by the Kremlin, it’s not clear whether the accusations are based on any evidence or whether Russia has plans to leverage deserters in other countries for further chaos. The tone of the complaint echoed other suspicions among European authorities, which have questioned in recent months whether Putin has designs on territories [beyond just Ukraine](#).

Other nations are not keen on welcoming a mass influx of Russians during the war. The Finnish government announced Thursday that by Friday it will be closing its borders to [“strongly” restrict entry of Russian tourists](#) due to security concerns.

While there will be exceptions for unspecified “humanitarian reasons,” Finland’s government said welcoming Russian citizens into Finland would be a dangerous step it doesn’t wish to take at this time in the war.

“The Russian invasion of Ukraine and the mobilization declared by Russia have changed the security situation in Europe,” Finland’s Ministries for Foreign Affairs and the Interior said in an announcement. “The Government deems that the Russian mobilization and the rapidly increasing volume of tourists arriving in Finland and transiting via Finland endanger Finland’s international position and international relations.”

[Poland and the Baltic states](#) also enacted bans earlier this month in an attempt to punish Russia for the invasion.

Estonia’s Interior Minister Lauri Laanemets said Estonia shouldn’t let Russian people into Estonia now because there is a [“collective responsibility of Russian citizens”](#) for the war in Ukraine.

Estonian and Lithuanian officials emphasized they weren’t interested in welcoming Russians to their countries because they believed Russians should stay in Russia and protest the war and put domestic pressure on Putin to abandon his goals in Ukraine, rather than just run away.

“It will hopefully increase discontent among the population. It is no longer just professional soldiers, people from remote regions or convicts who are being sent to the front, but the desire is for everyone to be relegated to cannon fodder,” Laanemets said.

“Things Russian men can do instead of running away to Europe: Protest, disobey, AWOL, POW, mutiny. Asylum for 25 million draft dodgers is not an option. Russians must liberate Russia,” the [Minister of Foreign Affairs of Lithuania, Gabrielius Landsbergis](#), said.

World leaders have drummed up debates about whether Russian citizens should bear the brunt of Putin’s war in Ukraine since the beginning of the invasion earlier this year.

The [European Union this year suspended a visa facilitation](#) agreement with Russia, which has effectively increased the processing time for visas and introduced other more restrictive rules for Russians. The EU and the U.K. have also imposed a [flight ban on Russian planes](#), restricting Russians' movement around the world.

The White House has said in previous months that in issuing sanctions and directives on Russia, the United States does not intend to punish Russian citizens.

"We're not trying to hurt the people of Russia or the Russian people. We're trying to... squeeze the financial system and sector to make sure there are significant consequences for the actions of the president," then-White House Press Secretary Jen Psaki said in a briefing with reporters.

Russians are welcome to come to the United States and apply for asylum, the White House said this week. The State Department appeared to express openness Wednesday to granting asylum to Russians fleeing conscription.

"What we have made clear is the distinction we make and that a number of countries have made around the world, the distinction between the Russian Government and the Russian people," State Department Press Secretary Ned Price said Wednesday in a briefing. "We think it's important, for our part, to continue to have our doors open to Russians who are in a position to come to this country, and we have seen over the course of this war potentially hundreds of thousands of Russians quite literally vote with their feet—Russians who have never had the genuine opportunity to have their voice heard at the ballot box are now in a position to vote with their feet."

But when it comes to Russians fleeing conscription, the Biden administration appeared to acknowledge there is some grey area that countries will have to deal with in the coming days.

"Each country is going to have to make its own sovereign decision about how to respond to Russians that are seeking refuge and safety within their borders," Price said. "That is not something that we are going to prescribe."

The Department of Homeland Security, which will be handling such asylum requests in the United States, did not immediately return request for comment on whether the Biden administration considers fleeing conscription as a reason enough to grant asylum.

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HEADLINE	09/29 Hundreds East coast hospitals flood risks
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/Health/hundreds-hospitals-atlantic-gulf-coasts-risk-flooding-ian/story?id=90634559
GIST	<p>Hundreds of hospitals along the Atlantic and Gulf coasts are at risk of flooding from hurricanes a new study finds, as Hurricane Ian made landfall in Florida Wednesday as a Category 4 storm.</p> <p>The study, published Thursday, found that even lower category storms carry a serious risk to medical centers along the coasts.</p> <p>Researchers from Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health, Boston University School of Medicine and nonprofit research institute PSE Healthy Energy looked at 682 hospitals in 78 metropolitan areas within 10 miles from the coast.</p> <p>This covers an area where 85 million people -- or roughly one in four Americans --- live. Researchers found that in 25 of the 78 metro areas, at least half of the hospitals are at risk of flooding from a Category 2 hurricane.</p> <p>Additionally, because of the rise in sea levels caused by climate change, hospitals are at a 22% higher risk of flooding.</p>

Dr. Aaron Bernstein, senior author of the study and interim director of the Harvard Chan Center for Climate, Health and the Global Environment, told ABC News that this is the first study to examine what would happen to health care systems if they got hit by a hurricane.

"I [looked at the] literature and found that there was no literature on what hurricanes would systematically do to access to health care on the Atlantic or Gulf Coasts," he said. "There were papers showing the aftermath, so we have these studies after Katrina, after Sandy, after Harvey and those are very informative about what's at stake here."

He went on, "But no one had looked prospectively and said, 'OK, at a systems level, how do hurricanes matter to the ability of hospitals to be functional and deliver care at a time when people may need them more than usual?'"

Five of the 10 metro areas -- Tampa-St. Petersburg-Clearwater, Cape Coral-Fort Myers, North Port-Sarasota, Orlando-Kissimmee-Sanford, and Jacksonville -- will be tested by Ian.

The Sarasota area has the most hospitals at risk of flooding followed by the Fort Myers area.

Photos have been posted on social media of hospitals, such as Tampa General Hospital, preparing for storm surges from Hurricane Ian by building a flood barrier.

The other five metro areas include Miami-Fort Lauderdale-West Palm Beach, New York-Newark-Jersey City, Boston-Cambridge-Newton, New Orleans-Metairie and Philadelphia-Camden-Wilmington.

Additionally, the study found that even if hospitals themselves were not flooded, the roads around them may be, which could restrict or prevent access to care.

In 18 of the metro areas examined, at least half of all roads within one mile of hospitals were at risk of flooding due to a Category 2 hurricane.

"I think what our study underscores, and past experience does as well, is that while you could have a fully-functioning hospital in one part of a city, if you can't get there because the roads are underwater, it's not that helpful," Bernstein said. "So, we need to think more systematically in our response to hurricanes. It requires a coordinated response in metro areas about knowing where beds are, knowing where staff is available, where supplies can be accessed, knowing where transportation is safe."

Bernstein said the study gives an idea of which cities have hospitals that need to prepare against life-threatening flooding before it's too late.

"Most hospitals have done very little [to prepare for hurricanes] because they don't have the resources, which is understandable," Bernstein said. "Health care is on the ropes after COVID. So you can imagine the idea of building protections against flooding is not necessarily top on the priority list."

He continued, "With the risks of climate change, and hurricanes in particular, so grossly apparent, I don't think anyone wants to look back and say, 'Well, we let these people die.' I think we need to use the knowledge we can glean, to take informed steps that balance costs with outcomes."

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HEADLINE	09/29 India: virus kills 100,000 cattle, sickens 2M
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/Health/wireStory/virus-kills-100000-cattle-india-threatens-livelihoods-90743774
GIST	NEW DELHI -- A viral disease has killed nearly 100,000 cows and buffaloes in India and sickened over 2 million more.

The outbreak has triggered devastating income losses for cattle farmers since the disease not only results in deaths but can also lead to decreased milk production, emaciated animals, and birth issues.

The disease, called lumpy skin disease, is spread by insects that drink blood like mosquitoes and ticks. Infected cows and buffaloes get fevers and develop lumps on their skin.

Farmers have experienced severe losses from extreme weather events over the past year: a record-shattering heat wave in India reduced wheat yields in April, insufficient rainfall in eastern states like Jharkhand state shriveled parched winter crops such as pulses, and an unusually intense September rainfall has damaged rice in the north.

And now, the virus has spread to at least 15 states with the number of cow and buffalo deaths nearly doubling in three weeks, the Press Trust of India news agency reported.

The contagion spreading among cattle is having a disproportionate impact on small farmers, many of whom have insulated themselves from the shocks of climate change by rearing cattle for milk, said Devinder Sharma, an agriculture policy expert in northern Chandigarh city.

“It's a serious, serious issue and this (disease) ... has been growing since the last couple of years,” he said, adding that the government figures were likely an undercount of the actual death toll from the disease.

The first cases in South Asia were detected in 2019, and it has since spread to India, China, and Nepal. It was first recorded in Zambia in 1929 and has extended through Africa and more recently to parts of Europe.

Dairy is among the largest agricultural commodities in India, employing 80 million people and contributing to 5% of its economy, per federal data. It's the world's largest milk producer, making up more than a fifth of global production — but exports are only a fraction of this.

To try and protect the industry, authorities are vaccinating healthy cows using a shot designed for a similar disease while efforts are underway to develop a more effective vaccine.

India's vast hinterland is now punctuated by mass graves of cows. In some places, the carcasses rot in the open and the pained cries of sick animals are resound in villages. Western Rajasthan state has seen the worst impact: 60,000 cattle dead and nearly 1.4 million sickened.

“The disease is contagious. It's now shifting from the west to the east,” warned Narendra Mohan Singh, a director at Rajasthan state's Animal Husbandry Department.

In bordering Uttar Pradesh state, India's most populous, the trade and movement of cattle with neighboring states has been curbed. But farmers like Amarnath Sharma in Milkipur village say they have been left in the dark. Three of his five cows are sick and, while he has heard about the viral disease, he doesn't know how to help his livestock.

“If these animals don't get treatment, they'll die,” he said.

Farmers in affected states, like the Himalayan Himachal Pradesh, have also urged the government for financial aid.

Meanwhile, a study of the lumpy skin disease virus' genetic makeup found that it was very different from previous versions, said Vinod Scaria, a scientist at the Institute of Genomics and Integrative Biology in New Delhi.

Viruses evolve all the time and not all these changes are harmful to health. But Scaria, who is one of the study's authors, said it exposed the need for continuous monitoring and tracking of diseases since it wasn't clear how the virus evolved in the past two years.

	"If you had continuous surveillance, you would be prepared," he said.
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HEADLINE	09/29 Pipeline leak damages marine life, climate
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/baltic-sea-pipeline-leak-damages-marine-life-climate-90720952
GIST	<p>WASHINGTON -- Methane escaping from the damaged Nord Stream pipelines that run between Russia and Europe is likely to result in the biggest known gas leak to take place over a short period of time and highlights the problem of large methane escapes elsewhere around the world, scientists say.</p> <p>"From what I have seen this is an unprecedented loss to the atmosphere of fossil methane in a very short time from a concentrated source," said President of the U.S. National Academy of Sciences Marcia McNutt. She oversaw American government efforts to assess the breadth of the 2010 BP oil spill the gulf of Mexico.</p> <p>Methane acts quickly to heat the Earth. The fact that it disappears faster from the atmosphere than carbon dioxide, "is probably small consolation to the citizens of Florida and other places who are already being hit by more frequent and more deadly tropical storms, supercharged by an ocean superheated by greenhouse gas releases to the atmosphere," McNutt said in an email.</p> <p>There is still uncertainty in estimating total damage, but researchers say vast plumes of this potent greenhouse gas will have significant detrimental impacts on the climate.</p> <p>Immediate harm to marine life and fisheries in the Baltic Sea and to human health will also result because benzene and other trace chemicals are typically present in natural gas, researchers say.</p> <p>"This will probably be the biggest gas leak ever, in terms of its rate," said Stanford University climate scientist Rob Jackson.</p> <p>The velocity of the gas erupting from four documented leaks in the pipelines — which the North Atlantic Treaty Organization has attributed to sabotage — is part of what makes the impacts severe.</p> <p>When methane leaks naturally from vents on the ocean floor, the quantities are usually small and the gas is mostly absorbed by seawater. "But this is not a normal situation for gas release," said Jackson. "We're not talking about methane bubbling up to the surface like seltzer water, but a plume of rushing gas," he said.</p> <p>Jackson and other scientists estimate that between 50% and nearly 100% of total methane emitted from the pipeline will reach the atmosphere.</p> <p>The Danish government issued a worst case scenario that assumed all the gas reached the air, and German officials Thursday issued a somewhat lower one.</p> <p>In the meantime, it's nearly impossible for anyone to approach the highly flammable plume to attempt to curb the release of gas, which energy experts estimate may continue until Sunday.</p> <p>"Methane is very flammable — if you go in there, you'd have a good chance of it being a funeral pyre," said Ira Leifer, an atmospheric scientist. If the gas-air mix was within a certain range, an airplane could easily ignite travelling into the plume, for example.</p> <p>Methane isn't the only risk. "Natural gas isn't refined to be super clean — there are trace elements of other compounds, like benzene," a carcinogen, said Leifer.</p>

	<p>“The amount of these trace elements cumulatively entering the environment is significant right now — this will cause issues for fisheries and marine ecosystems and people who potentially eat those fish,” he said.</p> <p>David Archer, a professor in the geophysical sciences department at University of Chicago who focuses on the global carbon cycle, said that escape of methane in the Baltic Sea is part of the much larger worldwide problem of methane emissions.</p> <p>The gas is a major contributor to climate change, responsible for a significant share of the climate disruption people are already experiencing. That is because it is 82.5 times more potent than carbon dioxide at absorbing the sun’s heat and warming the Earth, over the short term.</p> <p>Climate scientist have found that methane emissions from the oil and gas industry are far worse than what companies are reporting, despite claims by major companies that they’ve reduced their emissions.</p> <p>Scientists measuring methane from satellites in space have found that emissions from oil and gas operations are usually at least twice as high as what the companies reported, said Thomas Lauvaux, climate scientist at University of Reims in France.</p> <p>Many of those so-called leaks are not accidental. Companies release the gas during routine maintenance. Lauvaux and other scientists observed more than 1,500 major methane leaks globally, and potentially tens of thousands of smaller leaks, using satellites, he said.</p>
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HEADLINE	09/30 Ukraine official: Russia strikes city, kills 23
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/ukrainian-official-russian-strike-kills-23-wounds-28-90750987
GIST	<p>KYIV, Ukraine -- A Russian strike on the Ukrainian city of Zaporizhzhia killed at least 23 people and wounded dozens, an official said Friday, just hours before Moscow planned to annex more of Ukraine in an escalation of the seven-month war.</p> <p>Zaporizhzhia Regional Governor Oleksandr Starukh made the announcement in an online statement Friday. He said there were at least 28 wounded when Russian forces targeted a humanitarian convoy heading to Russian-occupied territory.</p> <p>He posted images of burned out vehicles and bodies lying in the road. Russia did not immediately acknowledge the strike.</p> <p>The attack comes as Moscow prepares to annex four regions into Russia after an internationally criticized, gunpoint referendum vote as part of its invasion of Ukraine. Those regions include areas near Zaporizhzhia, but not the city itself, which remains in Ukrainian hands.</p> <p>Starukh said those in the convoy planned to travel into Russian-occupied territory to pick up their relatives and then take them to safety. He said rescuers were at the site of the attack.</p> <p>The annexation — and planned celebratory concerts and rallies in Moscow and the occupied territories — would come just days after voters supposedly approved Moscow-managed “referendums” that Ukrainian and Western officials have denounced as illegal, forced and rigged.</p> <p>Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters Thursday that four regions of Ukraine — Luhansk, Donetsk, Kherson and Zaporizhzhia — would be folded into Russia during a Kremlin ceremony attended by President Vladimir Putin, who is expected to give a major speech. Peskov said the regions’ pro-Moscow administrators would sign treaties to join Russia in the Kremlin’s ornate St. George’s Hall.</p> <p>In an apparent response, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy called an emergency meeting Friday of his National Security and Defense Council.</p>

Zelenskyy also sought to capitalize on anti-war sentiment in Russia by issuing a special video directed at Russia's ethnic minorities, especially those in Dagestan, one of the country's poorer regions in the North Caucasus.

"You do not have to die in Ukraine," he said, wearing a black hoodie that read in English "I'm Ukrainian," and standing in front of a plaque in Kyiv memorializing what he called a Dagestani hero. He called on the ethnic minorities to resist mobilization.

The U.S. and its allies have promised to adopt even more sanctions than they've already levied against Russia and to offer millions of dollars in extra support for Ukraine as the Kremlin duplicates the annexation playbook it followed when it incorporated Ukraine's Crimean Peninsula in 2014.

Putin early Friday issued decrees recognizing the independence of the Kherson and Zaporizhzhia regions, steps he had taken in February regarding Luhansk and Donetsk and earlier for Crimea.

Ukraine has repeated its vows to recapture the four regions, as well as Crimea. For its part, Russia pledges to defend all its territory — including newly annexed regions — by all available means, including nuclear weapons.

Heightening the tensions are Russia's partial military mobilization and allegations of sabotage of two Russian pipelines on the Baltic Sea floor that were designed to feed natural gas to Europe. Adding to the Kremlin's woes are Ukraine's success in recapturing some of the very land Russia is annexing and problems with the mobilization that President Vladimir Putin acknowledged Thursday.

Ukraine's Western supporters have described the stage-managed referendums on whether to live under Russian rule as a bald-faced land grab based on lies. They say some people were forced to vote at gunpoint in an election without independent observers on territory from which thousands of residents have fled or been forcibly deported.

In unusually strong language, U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres told reporters Thursday in New York that Russia's annexation would violate the U.N. Charter and has "no legal value." He described the move as "a dangerous escalation" and said it "must not be accepted."

"Any decision by Russia to go forward will further jeopardize the prospects for peace," Guterres said.

As a veto-wielding permanent member of the U.N. Security Council, Russia bears "a particular responsibility" to respect the U.N. Charter, the secretary-general said.

U.N. spokesman Stephane Dujarric said Guterres conveyed the message to Russia's U.N. ambassador, Vassily Nebenzia, on Wednesday.

In what would be a major blow to Moscow's war effort, the Washington-based Institute for the Study of War said Ukrainian forces may soon encircle Lyman, 160 kilometers (100 miles) southeast of Kharkiv, Ukraine's second-largest city.

"The collapse of the Lyman pocket will likely be highly consequential to the Russian grouping" in the northern Donetsk and western Luhansk regions and "may allow Ukrainian troops to threaten Russian positions along the western Luhansk" region, the institute said, citing Russian reports.

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Cyber, Tech Awareness

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HEADLINE	09/29 VA probes source code breach
SOURCE	https://www.newsmax.com/newsfront/veterans-affairs-cyberbreach-source-code/2022/09/29/id/1089718/

GIST

The Department of Veterans Affairs has launched an investigation following a cyber breach involving source code containing sensitive account credentials, FedScoop reports.

Three sources with direct knowledge of the situation told the news outlet that a federal contractor published the information — including hard-coded administrator account privileges, encrypted key tokens and specific database information — on the internet hosting service GitHub.

Six foreign IP addresses cloned the source code within minutes of publication, including at least one from a country hostile to the United States, sources said.

The cloning of the code could potentially grant foreign agents access to application credentials and other data that could allow lateral movement through an agency's IT systems.

According to FedScoop, secret keys used to access at least 12 applications were exposed as a result of the breach.

Sources told the outlet that the information was leaked online after the contractor allegedly copied source code from a VA-managed GitHub account and published it on their personal GitHub account, which was switched to public mode.

The sources spoke on condition of anonymity because Congress has not yet been briefed on the situation.

The source code was published on July 5, sources said, but IT leadership at the VA did not learn of the breach until Sept. 9, when it was revealed through the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency's (CISA) disclosure program and reported.

After a government department is made aware of a potential breach by CISA, it must work to determine the details of the incident and the type and sensitivity of information that may have been accessed.

Microsoft, which owns GitHub, was reportedly contacted regarding the incident and provided a detection and response team to conduct an analysis of the security risks posed by the leaked information.

Although federal agencies frequently publish open-source code, several senior IT officials told FedScoop that this disclosure was unusual because it involved code being copied from an official agency GitHub source and included sensitive credentials.

"Copying [source code] from government private side to personal is strictly forbidden, so if the repo was private then that's a firing and dismissal offense," one source told the outlet.

The breach is one of several that have made headlines in recent weeks.

On Thursday, an information technology company that supports U.S. defense and intelligence was apparently victimized by a ransomware attack. BlackCat, a ransomware operation that also goes by the names ALPHV and Noberus, alerted IT company NJVC about the breach.

"We strongly recommend that you contact us to discuss your situation," BlackCat told NJVC, according to a DarkFeed tweet. "Otherwise, the confidential data in our possession will be released in stages every 12 hours."

Also this week, The Hill reported that the Department of Justice charged an Army doctor and his wife, an anesthesiologist, with conspiring to provide military documents to Russia.

	Anna Gabrielian, 36, and Jamie Lee Henry, 39, both of Rockville, Maryland, were indicted on Wednesday, accused of conspiring to provide the personal medical records of individuals to Russia to assist the nation in its invasion of Ukraine, according to a Thursday release unsealing the charges.
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HEADLINE	09/29 US defeats Russia to head UN tech agency
SOURCE	https://therecord.media/us-candidate-defeats-russian-rival-to-head-un-tech-agency/
GIST	<p>Amid the backdrop of the war in Ukraine, and a battle for the future of the internet, the American contender to lead the United Nations telecommunications agency has defeated their Russian rival by a surprising landslide vote.</p> <p>Despite anxieties about the direction of the vote on Thursday, Doreen Bogdan-Martin won by a wide margin, receiving 139 votes in the secret ballot to Rashid Ismailov's 25. She will begin her four-year term as the International Telecommunication Union's new Secretary-General on January 1, 2023.</p> <p>To put her victory in context, the last contested election for Secretary-General was in 2006, when Mali's candidate defeated Germany's by 95 votes to 60.</p> <p>Bogdan-Martin's campaign was based on her 28 years of work at the ITU. She was "a known quantity, a deeply-respected career ITU person," Emily Taylor, an associate fellow with Chatham House, told The Record. She had received endorsements from a wide range of political figures in the U.S., including President Joe Biden.</p> <p>Although the American campaign did not explicitly criticize Russia over the invasion of Ukraine, Bogdan-Martin hinted towards it in her victory speech, mentioning "escalating conflicts" as being among the "significant challenges" facing the world, alongside her priority of extending connectivity to the 2.7 billion people globally who do not yet have stable internet access.</p> <p>The United Kingdom's ambassador to Geneva, Simon Manley, told the Inside Geneva podcast last week that while the U.K. believed it was "not the right moment to see Russians elected to top positions, when Putin's regime is flouting international law and flouting the charter" the ITU election was "not about the U.S. v Russia".</p> <p>The basis on which the U.K. (alongside the U.S. and Russia) wished for the contest to instead be fought about the merits of two competing visions for the future of the governance of the internet.</p> <p>In general the West would like to see the internet remain governed in a multilateral way, involving stakeholders and non-government organizations like ICANN [Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers] — in contrast to the "top-down" increased role that governments would have in the vision that has been put forward by Russia and China.</p> <p>The impact of Russia's invasion of Ukraine on the vote in Bucharest, Romania, is unknown — very few delegates openly discuss who they are going to vote for or why — but an angry statement issued by Russian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova a week before the vote may have contributed to Ismailov's defeat.</p> <p>His pre-election plans were inconvenienced when the Romanian Embassy in Moscow withdrew 14 visas that had been issued to members of the Russian delegation, describing the individuals as "a threat to national security."</p> <p>More than half of the Russian delegation was still able to attend to engage in the normal pre-election events, including a reception, and while the impact may have been a very small embarrassment and inconvenience for Russia, it was not expected to severely influence the vote.</p>

	<p>However, Zakharova’s furious statement in response broke almost all of the unspoken rules of engagement that had been observed during the campaign so far. She alleged the visa withdrawals were part of a Washington-led conspiracy — undermining the purposeful blandness and de-politicised approach of Ismailov’s campaign brochure — and explicitly accused the American candidate of being prepared to “push Western installations in the ITU to the detriment of users of the rest of the world” — implicitly suggesting that the Russian government viewed the role of Secretary-General as one of significant political influence.</p> <p>Following the vote in Bucharest on Thursday, Robert Collett, a former British diplomat and associate fellow at Chatham House, tweeted it was “interesting” that the Russian candidate received only 25 votes as — given normal UN votes — there are 30 countries which persistently vote in the same way. He said this showed that Russia “struggled to mobilize its like-minded group yet alone [the group in] the middle-ground.”</p> <p>The ITU election showed a very significant commitment in one direction, but it remains to be seen whether that is based on a growing appreciation for the multilateral stakeholder-led approach to internet governance or simply an aversion to Russia.</p>
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HEADLINE	09/29 Pentagon bug bounty: 349 vulnerabilities
SOURCE	https://therecord.media/pentagon-bug-bounty-program-turns-up-nearly-350-vulnerabilities/
GIST	<p>White hat hackers uncovered almost 350 vulnerabilities inside the Defense Department’s networks during a week-long bug bounty program held earlier this year, according to the initiative’s organizers.</p> <p>Nearly 270 researchers participated in the effort, called “Hack U.S.”, which offered financial rewards for sniffing out critical- and high-level vulnerabilities in systems operated by the Pentagon.</p> <p>Competitors submitted 648 reports, within the scope of the DoD’s vulnerability disclosure program (VDP), to bug bounty platform HackerOne and the department agencies overseeing the pilot program between July 4 and July 11. Of those, 349 were deemed “actionable” — paying out \$75,000 in total bounties and another \$35,000 in bonuses and awards.</p> <p>“In just seven days, Hack U.S. ethical hackers submitted 648 reports, including numerous which would be considered critical had they not been identified and remediated during this bug bounty challenge,” Melissa Vice, the VDP director, said in a statement.</p> <p>“This bounty challenge shows the extra value we can earn by leveraging their subject matter expertise in an incentivized manner,” she added.</p> <p>The department launched its first bug bounty, dubbed “Hack the Pentagon,” in 2016. The practice has since proliferated to include specific chunks of DoD’s various systems, the military branches and the Homeland Security Department.</p> <p>Vice said an initial evaluation of the program’s results found that the most commonly identified vulnerability was categorized as “information disclosure.”</p> <p>“With the identification of vulnerability trends, we can seek out patterns of detection and ultimately create new processes and system checks to ensure we address the root cause and develop further mitigations against malicious actors who might try to exploit our systems,” she said.</p> <p>Other top flaws discovered through the effort included improper access and generic SQL injection.</p> <p>“We have to make sure we stay two steps ahead of any malicious actor,” Katie Olson Savage, deputy chief digital and artificial intelligence officer and Defense Digital Service director, said in a statement. “This</p>

	<p>crowd-sourced security approach is a key step to identifying and closing potential gaps in our attack surface.”</p> <p>Alex Rice, HackerOne’s co-founder and chief technology officer, praised the department, saying it “has long since recognized the benefits of working with hackers as an additional layer of protection for their digital assets.”</p> <p>He said the vulnerabilities unearthed by the latest competition “will offer more air cover on all the assets that help maintain U.S. national security, and insights from reports will help inform how the DOD approaches identifying future threats.”</p>
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HEADLINE	09/29 Russia ‘highly likely’ turn to cyber in winter
SOURCE	https://therecord.media/finnish-intelligence-warns-russia-highly-likely-to-turn-to-cyber-in-winter/
GIST	<p>The head of the Finnish Security Intelligence Service (<i>Suojelupoliisi</i> or <i>SUPO</i>) says it is “highly likely that Russia will turn to the cyber environment over the winter” for espionage due to challenges impacting its human intelligence work.</p> <p>In the unclassified National Security Overview 2022 published on Thursday, SUPO said that Russia’s traditional intelligence gathering approach using spies with diplomatic cover “has become substantially more difficult since Russia launched its war of aggression in Ukraine, as many Russian diplomats have been expelled from the West.”</p> <p>The agency acknowledged that there are still some active intelligence officers working inside the country, but said the Finnish government “has probably severed the connection to their Russian networks, at least for the time being, and little information is available through the usual channels.”</p> <p>The report warns that the Russian security and intelligence services have not abandoned human intelligence and were “increasingly targeting foreigners who reside in or visit Russia” as well as Russians working in the West when they return. SUPO assessed that Russian citizens who occupied critical positions in Finland were particularly at risk of coercion from the Russian authorities.</p> <p>“The threat of corporate espionage by Russia is also increasing as sanctions necessitate the launch of high-technology manufacturing to replace imports from the West. This places a particular premium on data security in Finnish businesses,” the public intelligence assessment stated.</p> <p>Despite a number of cyberattacks targeting Ukraine’s critical infrastructure – amounting to what a senior British cybersecurity official described as “probably the most sustained and intensive cyber campaign on record” – SUPO’s director Antti Peltari said that the agency considered it “unlikely that any cyberattack will paralyze critical infrastructure [in Finland] in the near future.”</p> <p>The agency’s warning follows The Record reporting earlier this month that fears are growing about Russian cyber spies turning to industrial espionage, based on a Russian government acknowledgement that its domestic technology industry was lagging foreign competitors by more than a decade, and a speech President Vladimir Putin delivered to Russia’s Foreign Intelligence Service stressing the priority for the spies to support “the industrial and technological development of our country.”</p> <p>Finland, which had historically declared itself to be a non-aligned country – in part due to troubled relations with Russia, with whom it shares a 830-mile border – applied to join NATO this year following the invasion of Ukraine.</p> <p>SUPO said that NATO membership would make Finland “a more interesting target for Russian intelligence and influence operations” particularly in regards to its military policy.</p>
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HEADLINE	09/29 Semiconductor industry faces attacks
SOURCE	https://therecord.media/semiconductor-industry-faced-eight-attacks-from-ransomware-groups-extortion-gangs-in-2022/
GIST	<p>Several of the world's leading semiconductor companies have faced ransomware attacks, extortion attempts and other malicious activity in 2022 — right as the industry became critical to the world's technology sector.</p> <p>Recorded Future, which owns The Record, released a report on Thursday outlining eight different cyberattacks on semiconductor companies in 2022.</p> <p>Five of the incidents involved ransomware from the LockBit, Cuba and LV gangs. The other three were done by extortion groups like Lapsus\$ and RansomHouse.</p> <p>In 2022, Recorded Future researchers tracked attacks on semiconductor giants like NVIDIA, AMD and Samsung as well as others like Ignitarium, Diodes, SilTerra Malaysia Sdn. Bhd., Semikron and Etron Technology.</p> <p>All of the attacks took place as the scramble for semiconductors became a national security concern for several countries including the United States, which signed a bill last month to invest \$52.7 billion in domestic semiconductor manufacturing and science research.</p> <p>The researchers noted that while none of the cyberattacks on semiconductor companies have “direct connections” to nation-state groups, several companies have found “state-sponsored threat actors masquerading as ransomware groups and using at least 5 ransomware variants — LockFile, AtomSilo, Rook, Night Sky, and Pandora — to conduct cyber espionage.”</p> <p>The Recorded Future researchers also theorized that while the ransomware attacks on semiconductor companies in 2022 seemed mostly financially motivated, nation state actors “may have already become affiliates with RaaS [ransomware-as-a-service] operators and are using different ransomware families to conduct cyberattacks with the main objective of stealing IP from semiconductor companies.”</p> <p>The tactic allegedly allows nation-state threat actors to make use of readily available ransomware to encrypt and steal information, and “make the cyberattacks look like attacks from ransomware groups.”</p> <p>“As the competition for semiconductor supremacy is at the heart of the economic competition between China and Taiwan, we believe it is likely that cyberattacks and industrial espionage against semiconductor companies will continue,” they said, calling semiconductors the “hearts of electronic devices such as smartphones, computers, automobiles, appliances, televisions, and advanced medical diagnostic equipment.”</p> <p>“Any disruption to the semiconductor sector would likely have an impact across all other manufacturing sectors. We believe that ransomware operators see semiconductor companies as high-value targets and leverage media coverage to apply pressure on the victim organization to negotiate and pay the ransom due to the importance of semiconductors to the global economy.”</p> <p>Of the ransomware attacks on semiconductor companies, most involved the use of malware to encrypt data, extortion threats, the publishing of source code and other proprietary data.</p> <p>Some groups threatened to sell company data and plans to competitors, rival nations and more while others used the code-signing certificates stolen from semiconductor companies to sign malware.</p> <p>Most of the attacks were done by affiliates of the groups through the ransomware-as-a-service model.</p> <p>In addition to the ransomware attacks on Ignitarium, Diodes Inc., Etron Technology, SilTerra Malaysia Sdn. Bhd., and Semikron — NVIDIA, AMD and Samsung faced theft of data and extortion from the RansomHouse gang and the notorious Lapsus\$ Group.</p>

	<p>Lapsus\$ made its return to headlines over the last week when Uber attributed an attack to the group.</p> <p>The report calls for semiconductor companies to be added to the U.S. Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency's (CISA) list of 16 critical infrastructure sectors because some ransomware groups have tenuous rules about attacks on certain companies.</p> <p>“But while the semiconductor industry may not be listed as a critical infrastructure sector as of this writing, with the growing recognition of its strategic importance, as well as the US government’s plan to support domestic chip production, we believe that there is a strong likelihood that the US government may classify semiconductor firms as a critical infrastructure sector in the future, which will serve as a new deterrent to prevent ransomware affiliates from targeting this industry,” the report explained.</p> <p>Last week, the U.S. House version of the annual National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) included a proposal that would create a new designation — called “systemically important entities” — requiring operators of the most vital U.S. critical infrastructure to enact strong digital security standards and share threat intelligence with the government in return for increased federal support.</p>
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HEADLINE	09/29 New espionage-related malware families
SOURCE	https://www.scmagazine.com/analysis/threat-intelligence/mandiant-unearths-new-espionage-related-malware-families-affecting-vmware-hypervisors
GIST	<p>Mandiant has discovered a new ecosystem of espionage-related malware targeting VMware ESXi, Linux vCenter servers, and Windows virtual machines that offers an attacker persistent administrative access, allows them to transfer files between hypervisors and guest machines, tamper with logging and execute arbitrary commands between virtual machines.</p> <p>The activity, detailed in a report released this morning, is being tracked under a new cluster, meaning Mandiant has not yet tied it to any previously known advanced persistent threat hacking group.</p> <p>The threat actor appears to be intentionally targeting devices without endpoint detection and response systems. Currently, Mandiant is aware of less than 10 organizations that are infected with the malware, but they expect that number to rise after their disclosure as security teams seek to detect the previously unknown activity.</p> <p>“As endpoint detection and response solutions improve malware detection efficacy on Windows systems, certain advanced state-sponsored threat actors have shifted to developing and deploying malware on systems that do not generally support EDR [and] most organizations do not have an efficient way to hunt for and identify threats on VMware hypervisors given the lack of EDR support,” said Mandiant chief technology officer Charles Carmakal in a statement.</p> <p>The activity was discovered during an incident response investigation where Mandiant observed an attacker leveraging legitimate VMWare tools to send commands to Windows guest machines. Later analysis of the hypervisor found that the actor had used malicious vSphere installation bundles, which VMWare describes as “a collection of files packaged into a single archive to facilitate distribution,” to install two different pieces of malware that Mandiant is calling VIRTUALPITA and VIRTUALPIE.</p> <p>VIRTUALPITA is a family of 64-bit malware that impersonates legitimate VMWare service names and ports, allowing an actor to execute arbitrary commands, upload or download files and obfuscate its presence. VIRTUALPIE, written in Python code, spawns a background IPV6 listener on ESXi servers, also allowing for arbitrary command execution as well as file transfer and reverse shell capabilities.</p> <p>Notably, the vulnerability can’t be executed remotely and requires administrative access, something that makes it significantly harder for most threat actors to use it, though well-resourced hacking groups backed</p>

by nation states can often obtain such access in other ways. To that point, there was no apparent evidence that the threat group leveraged a separate zero-day vulnerability to gain administrative privileges.

In a [blog](#) this morning, VMWare noted that “Mandiant found no evidence that a vulnerability in a VMware product was exploited to gain access to ESXi during their investigations” and as such, said there is no patch or plans to issue a security advisory or issue a CVE number. The company has [developed](#) hardening guidance based on the Mandiant report and said organizations should determine how quickly they should move to implement the guidance based on the context of their environments.

“This malware differs in that it supports remaining both persistent and covert, which is consistent with the goals of larger threat actors and APT groups who target strategic institutions with the intention of dwelling undetected for some time,” the VMWare blog states. “This contrasts with other threat actors and their toolkits who conduct ‘noisy,’ financially-motivated attacks using ransomware. Based on the indications that this new malware was deployed post-compromise, our guidance provides both specific detection and mitigation techniques as well as preventative techniques for strengthening operational security, secure configuration practices, and defense-in-depth.”

Origin of malware unknown, but "nexus" linked to China

The company offered few details regarding attribution or the identity or industries of the victims, saying only that the activity appears to have been done for espionage purposes and that they believe it has a “nexus to China,” an assessment that was made with only low confidence. That language is typically used by threat intelligence companies to convey that they believe a group may be operating from within a country or in ways that further their national interest but can’t conclusively be tied to any particular government.

The Chinese government is known for using [a wide variety of hacking teams](#) — some working directly within branches like the Ministry of State Security, as well as criminal hacking groups that may moonlight for or have only informal ties to the government — in a decades-long campaign to spy on private industry in the U.S. and other Western governments, steal data and intellectual property and bolster its own domestic economy. More recently, FBI Director Christopher Wray has said that “the greatest long term threat to our nation’s information and intellectual property, and to our economic vitality, is the counterintelligence and economic espionage threat from China.”

Such efforts have been so widespread and impactful that an internal U.S. Navy review in 2019 found Chinese hackers were pilfering so much intellectual property and classified secrets from the Defense Industrial Base that it was “materially eroding” U.S. economic and military advantages.

According to a press release, Mandiant and VMWare worked together to develop more specific [technical guidance](#) for hardening VMware servers, and Mandiant also released known indicators of compromise. In addition to finding more organizations infected with VIRTUALPITA and VIRTUALPIE, the company expects other threat groups to follow suit and create their own capabilities for leveraging these vulnerabilities in the future.

“It is critical for organizations to address this threat, as we anticipate other threat actors will develop similar malware capabilities over time,” said Carmakal.

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HEADLINE	09/29 NKorea hackers rigging legit software
SOURCE	https://www.securityweek.com/north-korean-gov-hackers-caught-rigging-legit-software
GIST	Threat hunters at Microsoft have intercepted a notorious North Korean government hacking group lacing legitimate open source software with custom malware capable of data theft, espionage, financial gain and network destruction.

The hackers, [a sub-group of Lazarus](#) that Microsoft calls ZINC, are weaponizing a wide range of open-source software including PuTTY, KiTTY, TightVNC, Sumatra PDF Reader, and muPDF/Subliminal Recording software installers in a new wave of malware attacks.

Redmond described the attackers as a “highly operational, destructive, and sophisticated nation-state activity group” and warned that its LinkedIn networking portal was also being abused to trawl for targets.

In a [report](#) documenting the discovery, Microsoft said the hackers use LinkedIn to connect with and befriend employees in organizations across multiple industries including media, defense and aerospace, and IT services in the US, UK, India, and Russia.

“Beginning in June 2022, ZINC employed traditional social engineering tactics by initially connecting with individuals on LinkedIn to establish a level of trust with their targets. Upon successful connection, ZINC encouraged continued communication over WhatsApp, which acted as the means of delivery for their malicious payloads,” Microsoft added.

The company is calling urgent attention to this threat because of the wide use and distribution of the booby-trapped legitimate software products. “[This] could pose a significant threat to individuals and organizations across multiple sectors and regions,” the company said.

In the report, Microsoft said the Lazarus sub-group has used spear-phishing as a primary tactic in the past but also managed strategic website compromises and [social engineering across social media networks](#) like LinkedIn and Twitter.

At LinkedIn, the company’s threat prevention and defense team said it detected the North Koreans creating fake profiles claiming to be recruiters working at technology, defense, and media entertainment companies. The goal was to lure targets away from LinkedIn and to the encrypted messaging app WhatsApp for the delivery of malware.

The hackers primarily targeted engineers and technical support professionals working at media and information technology companies located in the U.S., U.K., and India.

Once a connection with the target is established, the group pushes malicious versions of two SSH clients -- PuTTY and KiTTY -- that acted as the entry vector for the malware implant. Microsoft said the two utilities provide terminal emulator support for different networking protocols, making them attractive programs for individuals commonly targeted in these attacks.

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HEADLINE	09/29 India Swachhata platform breached
SOURCE	https://www.infosecurity-magazine.com/news/leakbase-breach-indias-swachhata/
GIST	<p>The data breach notification website Leakbase said someone allegedly hacked the Swachhata Platform in India and stole 16 million user records.</p> <p>The news comes from security researchers at CloudSEK, who discovered a post by Leakbase sharing data samples containing personally identifiable information (PII), including email addresses, hashed passwords and user IDs.</p> <p>According to an advisory published by CloudSEK earlier today, 6GB of compromised data from the Swachhata Platform – an initiative in association with the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs of India – is being shared via a popular file-hosting platform.</p> <p>“[Leakbase is] previously known from providing reliable information and data breaches from companies around the world,” wrote CloudSEK. “[Threat actors on the platform] often operate for financial gain and conduct sales on their marketplace forum Leakbase.”</p>

Back in 2017, the platform was at the center of a massive [data breach at Taringa](#), a Reddit-like social network website for Latin American users.

Further, CloudSEK said Leakbase users often offer access to admin panels and servers of several content management systems (CMSs), allegedly gained via unauthorized means and sold for monetary profit.

“This information can be aggregated to further be sold as leads on cybercrime forums,” the company wrote.

Additionally, the security experts said the data could be harvested by threat actors to conduct phishing, smishing and social engineering attacks.

To mitigate the impact of attacks like this, CloudSEK recommended system administrators to implement a strong password policy and enable multi-factor authentication (MFA) across logins.

Vulnerable and exploitable endpoints should be patched, and user account anomalies that could indicate possible account takeovers monitored regularly.

Finally, CloudSEK said companies should monitor cybercrime forums to keep up with the latest tactics employed by threat actors.

The alleged data leak comes days after [Optus was hit by a cyber-attack](#) that exposed the data of [at least 10,000 Australians](#).

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HEADLINE	09/29 Government, union-themed lures
SOURCE	https://www.infosecurity-magazine.com/news/government-union-lures-used-cobalt/
GIST	<p>Researchers at security firm Cisco Talos discovered a malicious campaign in August 2022 that relied on modularized attack techniques to deliver Cobalt Strike beacons and used them in follow-on attacks.</p> <p>The company published a new advisory about the campaign on Wednesday saying the threat actors behind it used a phishing email impersonating either a government organization in the US or a trade union in New Zealand with a malicious Microsoft Word document attachment as their initial attack vectors.</p> <p>The malicious attachment would then try to exploit a remote code execution (RCE) vulnerability (tracked CVE-2017-0199) in Microsoft Office.</p> <p>"If a victim opens the maldoc, it downloads a malicious Word document template hosted on an attacker-controlled Bitbucket repository," Cisco Talos wrote.</p> <p>Following the initial infection, the security company said it discovered two attack methodologies employed by the threat actor in this campaign.</p> <p>The first one saw the downloaded DOTM template executing an embedded malicious Visual Basic (VB) script, which led to the generation and execution of other obfuscated VB and PowerShell scripts.</p> <p>The second one, on the other hand, involved the malicious VB downloading and running a Windows executable that executes malicious PowerShell commands to download and implant the payload.</p> <p>"The payload discovered is a leaked version of a Cobalt Strike beacon," the Talos advisory reads.</p> <p>"The beacon configuration contains commands to perform targeted process injection of arbitrary binaries and has a high reputation domain configured, exhibiting the redirection technique to masquerade the beacon's traffic."</p>

	<p>While the main payload discovered in this campaign is a Cobalt Strike beacon, Talos also said the threat actors used the Redline information-stealer and Amadey botnet executables as payloads.</p> <p>"This campaign is a typical example of a threat actor using the technique of generating and executing malicious scripts in the victim's system memory," Talos wrote.</p> <p>"Defenders should implement behavioral protection capabilities in the organization's defense to effectively protect them against fileless threats."</p> <p>Additionally, Talos warned organizations to remain vigilant on the Cobalt Strike beacons and implement layered defenses designed to thwart the threat actor's attempts in the earlier stage of the attack's infection chain.</p> <p>The advisory comes weeks after Group-IB revealed that the Chinese advanced persistent threat (APT) actor known as APT41 used Cobalt Strike to target at least 13 organizations around the world.</p>
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HEADLINE	09/29 Capital One phish showcases target trend
SOURCE	https://www.darkreading.com/attacks-breaches/capital-one-phish-trend-targeting-bank-brands
GIST	<p>A recent phishing campaign exploits Capital One's new partnership with verification service Authentify, sending thousands of scam emails to the bank's customers to try and trick them into uploading images of their identification cards.</p> <p>The emails appear to be sent from a Capital One corporate account, and explain what the Authentify authentication app does, according to researchers at Vade who have been tracking the campaign since July 1. To provide an idea of the volume of scam emails being launched at customers, Vade reported that, at one point, the attackers sent out at least 6,000 in one day.</p> <p>"You are required to provide any copy of your ID for verification and to ensure that you are fully enrolled to avoid account restrictions now," the phishing email read.</p> <p>Vade noted that, unlike most other campaigns targeting credentials, this Capital One phishing scam was after identities.</p> <p>Phishers Watch the News</p> <p>The timing of the campaign shows cybercriminals are acutely aware of news items they can use to help sell their latest scams to victims, the Vade report said, adding that on the same day Capital One announced it would be working with Authentify, six other financial organizations, including Bank of America, PNC Bank, Wells Fargo, and other household brands, announced similar deals.</p> <p>These phishing attacks represent a larger trend of threat actors co-opting financial services brands to use as phishing lures for the cybercrimes, Vade added. Currently, financial services brands are the most spoofed, making up a full 34% of all phishing URLs during the first quarter of 2022, according to Vade's analysis.</p> <p>"We anticipate this trend to continue and urge users to be suspicious of both emails from financial institutions and also third-party applications associated with those institutions," read the report. "Always operate under the assumption that both can be spoofed and always login to accounts directly from a browser or application and not from email."</p>
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HEADLINE	09/29 New Royal ransomware quickly ramps up
SOURCE	https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/new-royal-ransomware-emerges-in-multi-million-dollar-attacks/

GIST

A ransomware operation named Royal is quickly ramping up, targeting corporations with ransom demands ranging from \$250,000 to over \$2 million.

Royal is an operation that launched in January 2022 and consists of a group of vetted and experienced ransomware actors from previous operations.

Unlike most active ransomware operations, Royal does not operate as a Ransomware-as-a-Service but is instead a private group without affiliates.

Vitali Kremez, CEO of [AdvIntel](#), told BleepingComputer that they utilized other ransomware operation's encryptors when first starting, such as BlackCat.

Soon after, the cybercrime enterprise began [using its own encryptors](#), the first being Zeon [[Sample](#)], which generated ransom notes very similar to Conti's.

However, since the middle of September 2022, the ransomware gang has rebranded again to 'Royal' and is using that name in ransom notes generated by a new encryptor.

How Royal breaches their victims

The Royal operation has been operating in the shadows, not using a data leak site and keeping news of their attacks quiet.

However, as the gang became more active this month, victims have appeared [at BleepingComputer](#), and a sample was uploaded to [VirusTotal](#).

In conversations with Kremez and a victim, BleepingComputer has created a better picture of how the gang operates.

According to Kremez, the Royal group utilizes targeted [callback phishing attacks](#) where they impersonate food delivery and software providers in emails pretending to be subscription renewals.

These phishing emails contain phone numbers that the victim can contact to cancel the alleged subscription, but, in reality, it is a number to a service hired by the threat actors.

When a victim calls the number, the threat actors use social engineering to convince the victim to install remote access software, which is used to gain initial access to the corporate network.

A Royal victim who spoke to BleepingComputer shared that the threat actors breached their network using a vulnerability in their custom web application, showing the threat actors are also being creative in how they gain access to a network.

Once they gain access to a network, they perform the same activities commonly used by other human-operated ransomware operations. They deploy Cobalt Strike for persistence, harvest credentials, spread laterally through the Windows domain, steal data, and ultimately encrypt devices.

A Royal victim also told BleepingComputer that they target virtual machines by directly encrypting their virtual disk files (VMDK). The threat actors then print out the ransom notes on network printers or create them on encrypted Windows devices.

The Tor negotiation site is nothing special, simply containing a chat screen where a victim can communicate with the Royal ransomware operators.

As part of these negotiations, the ransomware gang will provide the ransom demand, with ransom demands between \$250,000 and over \$2 million.

	<p>The ransomware gang will also commonly decrypt a few files for the victims to prove their decryptor works and share file lists of the stolen data.</p> <p>BleepingComputer is unaware of successful payments and has not seen a decryptor for this ransomware family.</p> <p>While the group claims to steal data for double-extortion attacks, it does not appear that a data leak site has been launched under the Royal brand as of yet.</p> <p>However, it is strongly advised that network, windows, and security admins keep an eye out for this group, as they are quickly ramping up operations and will likely become one of the more significant enterprise-targeting ransomware operations.</p>
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HEADLINE	09/29 Malware hides in Windows logo image
SOURCE	https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/hacking-group-hides-backdoor-malware-inside-windows-logo-image/
GIST	<p>Security researchers have discovered a malicious campaign by the 'Witchetty' hacking group, which uses steganography to hide a backdoor malware in a Windows logo.</p> <p>Witchetty is believed to have close ties to the state-backed Chinese threat actor APT10 (aka 'Cicada'). The group is also considered part of the TA410 operatives, previously linked to attacks against U.S. energy providers.</p> <p>Symantec reports that the threat group is operating a new cyberespionage campaign launched in February 2022 that targeted two governments in the Middle East and a stock exchange in Africa and is still ongoing.</p> <p>Using the Windows logo against you</p> <p>In this campaign, the hackers refreshed their toolkit to target different vulnerabilities and used steganography to hide their malicious payload from antivirus software.</p> <p>Steganography is the act of hiding data within other non-secret, public information or computer files, such as an image, to evade detection. For example, a hacker can create a working image file that displays correctly on the computer but also includes malicious code that can be extracted from it.</p> <p>In the campaign discovered by Symantec, Witchetty is using steganography to hide an XOR-encrypted backdoor malware in an old Windows logo bitmap image.</p> <p>The file is hosted on a trusted cloud service instead of the threat actor's command and control (C2) server, so the chances of raising security alarms while fetching it are minimized.</p> <p>"Disguising the payload in this fashion allowed the attackers to host it on a free, trusted service," Symantec explains in its report.</p> <p>"Downloads from trusted hosts such as GitHub are far less likely to raise red flags than downloads from an attacker-controlled command-and-control (C&C) server."</p> <p>The attack begins with the threat actors gaining initial access to a network by exploiting the Microsoft Exchange ProxyShell (CVE-2021-34473, CVE-2021-34523, and CVE-2021-31207) and ProxyLogon (CVE-2021-26855 and CVE-2021-27065) attack chains to drop webshells on vulnerable servers.</p> <p>Next, the threat actors fetch the backdoor hiding in the image file, which enables them to do the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Perform file and directory actions • Start, enumerate, or kill processes

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Modify the Windows Registry • Download additional payloads • Exfiltrate files <p>Witchetty also introduced a custom proxy utility that causes the infected computer to act "as the server and connects to a C&C server acting as a client, instead of the other way around."</p> <p>Other tools include a custom port scanner and a custom persistence utility that adds itself in the registry as "NVIDIA display core component."</p> <p>Along with the custom tools, Witchetty uses standard utilities like Mimikatz and to dump credentials from LSASS and abuses "lolbins" on the host, like CMD, WMIC, and PowerShell.</p> <p>TA410 and Witchetty remain active threats to governments and state organizations in Asia, Africa, and around the globe. The best way to prevent its attacks is to apply security updates as they are released. In the campaign discovered by Symantec, the hackers rely on exploiting last year's vulnerabilities to breach the target network, taking advantage of the poor administration of publicly exposed servers.</p>
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HEADLINE	09/28 Hackers make DDoS sneakier, harder
SOURCE	https://www.zdnet.com/article/hackers-are-making-ddos-attacks-sneakier-and-harder-to-protect-against/?web_view=true
GIST	<p>Cyber criminals are exploring new ways of conducting distributed denial of service (DDoS) attacks to make them harder to protect against and more effective at causing disruption.</p> <p>DDoS attacks are a relatively simple, but potent, form of cyberattack in which cyber criminals overload services with web traffic, slowing them down or taking them offline entirely, preventing others from being able to use them. The attacks can range from short campaigns that last a few minutes to attacks strung out over extended periods of time.</p> <p>These attacks often rely on malware-infected computers, servers and Internet of Things devices being connected into a botnet, which then overwhelms the target of the DDoS with web traffic.</p> <p>While DDoS attacks are unsophisticated compared to other malicious cyber campaigns, they can cause significant disruption. Large DDoS campaigns have temporarily severely disrupted online services, businesses and even the online infrastructures of entire countries.</p> <p>The criminals behind DDoS attacks – who often lease out their services for others to use – continue to find new ways to make attacks more effective, according to cybersecurity researchers at Netscout, who estimate that there were over six million DDoS attacks around the world during the first half of 2022.</p> <p>That level of DDoS attacks is consistent with the previous six-month period, but as content delivery networks and cybersecurity providers get better at preventing DDoS attacks, attackers are finding new and innovative ways to power their attacks.</p> <p>The researchers detail two methods of DDoS attack that have increased during the past year.</p> <p>In the first new type of attack, a wide range of services and/or devices are targeted with smaller portions of traffic compared to a regular DDoS incident. The idea is that multiple different pipelines of the target are overwhelmed, without triggering the thresholds that would initiate protection against unusually high levels of traffic.</p> <p>Many DDoS mitigation systems focus on individual IP addresses as opposed to entire subnets, so these attacks often fly under the radar.</p>

	<p>A second new attack sees attackers sends a huge amount of bogus subdomain requests in an attempt to overwhelm application-layer services.</p> <p>"By constantly innovating and adapting, attackers are designing new, more effective DDoS attack vectors or doubling down on existing effective methodologies," said Richard Hummel, threat intelligence lead at Netscout.</p> <p>It isn't just DDoS attacks that are evolving: cyber criminals are also putting resources into growing and adding features to botnets. By secretly infecting more machines with malware, cyber criminals can exploit them to launch larger attacks – and the Netscout report suggests that botnets are getting bigger, both in terms of size and capabilities.</p> <p>"Without question, botnets continue to evolve at a frightening pace. Their creators aren't restricted by red tape, internal processes such as Agile, or approval processes. Their capabilities expand with each passing year, and their targets now range from gamers to geopolitical enemies," researchers warned.</p>
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HEADLINE	09/29 'Hyperjacking' targets for insidious spying
SOURCE	https://www.wired.com/story/hyperjacking-vmware-mandiant/
GIST	<p>FOR DECADES, VIRTUALIZATION software has offered a way to vastly multiply computers' efficiency, hosting entire collections of computers as "virtual machines" on just one physical machine. And for almost as long, security researchers have warned about the potential dark side of that technology: theoretical "hyperjacking" and "Blue Pill" attacks, where hackers hijack virtualization to spy on and manipulate virtual machines, with potentially no way for a targeted computer to detect the intrusion. That insidious spying has finally jumped from research papers to reality with warnings that one mysterious team of hackers has carried out a spree of "hyperjacking" attacks in the wild.</p> <p>Today, Google-owned security firm Mandiant and virtualization firm VMware jointly published warnings that a sophisticated hacker group has been installing backdoors in VMware's virtualization software on multiple targets' networks as part of an apparent espionage campaign. By planting their own code in victims' so-called hypervisors—VMware software that runs on a physical computer to manage all the virtual machines it hosts—the hackers were able to invisibly watch and run commands on the computers those hypervisors oversee. And because the malicious code targets the hypervisor on the physical machine rather than the victim's virtual machines, the hackers' trick multiplies their access and evades nearly all traditional security measures designed to monitor those target machines for signs of foul play.</p> <p>"The idea that you can compromise one machine and from there have the ability to control virtual machines <i>en masse</i> is huge," says Mandiant consultant Alex Marvi. And even closely watching the processes of a target virtual machine, he says, an observer would in many cases see only "side effects" of the intrusion, given that the malware carrying out that spying had infected a part of the system entirely outside its operating system.</p> <p>Mandiant discovered the hackers earlier this year and brought their techniques to VMware's attention. Researchers say they've seen the group carry out their virtualization hacking—a technique historically dubbed hyperjacking in a reference to "hypervisor hijacking"—in fewer than 10 victims' networks across North America and Asia. Mandiant notes that the hackers, which haven't been identified as any known group, appear to be tied to China. But the company gives that claim only a "low confidence" rating, explaining that the assessment is based on an analysis of the group's victims and some similarities between their code and that of other known malware.</p> <p>While the group's tactics appear to be rare, Mandiant warns that their techniques to bypass traditional security controls by exploiting virtualization represent a serious concern and are likely to proliferate and evolve among other hacker groups. "Now that people know this is possible, it will point them toward other comparable attacks," says Mandiant's Marvi. "Evolution is the big concern."</p>

In a technical writeup, Mandiant describes how the hackers corrupted victims' virtualization setups by installing a malicious version of VMware's software installation bundle to replace the legitimate version. That allowed them to hide two different backdoors, which Mandiant calls VirtualPita and VirtualPie, in VMware's hypervisor program known as ESXi. Those backdoors let the hackers surveil and run their own commands on virtual machines managed by the infected hypervisor. Mandiant notes that the hackers didn't actually exploit any patchable vulnerability in VMware's software, but instead used administrator-level access to the ESXi hypervisors to plant their spy tools. That admin access suggests that their virtualization hacking served as a persistence technique, allowing them to hide their espionage more effectively long-term after gaining initial access to the victims' network through other means.

In a statement to WIRED, VMware said that "while there is no VMware vulnerability involved, we are highlighting the need for strong operational security practices that include secure credential management and network security." The company also pointed to a [guide](#) to "hardening" VMware setups against this sort of hacking, including better authentication measures to control who can tamper with ESXi software and validation measures to check whether hypervisors have been corrupted.

Since as early as 2006, security researchers have theorized that hyperjacking presents a method to stealthily spy on or manipulate victims using virtualization software. In a paper that year, Microsoft and University of Michigan researchers [described](#) the potential for hackers to install a malicious hypervisor they called a "hypervirus" on a target machine that places the victim inside a virtual machine run by the hacker without the victim's knowledge. By controlling that malicious hypervisor, everything on the target machine would be under the hacker's control, with practically no sign within the virtualized operating system that anything was amiss. Security researcher Joanna Rutkowska dubbed her own version of the technique a [Blue Pill attack](#), since it trapped the victim in a seamless environment entirely created by the hacker, *Matrix*-style, without their knowledge.

What Mandiant observed isn't exactly that Blue Pill or hypervirus technique, argues Dino Dai Zovi, a well-known cybersecurity researcher who gave a [talk at the Black Hat security conference about hypervisor hacking](#) in the summer of 2006. In those theoretical attacks, including his own work, a hacker creates a new hypervisor without the victim's knowledge, while in the cases Mandiant discovered, the spies merely hijacked existing ones. But he points out that this is a far easier and yet highly effective technique—and one he's expected for years. "I've always assumed it was possible and even being done," says Dai Zovi. "It's just a powerful position that gives full access to any of the virtual machines running on that hypervisor."

Aside from the difficulty of detecting the attack, he points out that it also serves as a multiplier of the hacker's control: In virtualization setups, two to five virtual machines can typically run on any physical computer, and there are often thousands of virtual machines on an organization's network running as everything from PCs to email servers. "That's a lot of scale and leverage," says Dai Zovi. "For an attacker, it's a good return on their investment."

Mandiant suggests in its writeup of the hacking campaign that attackers may be turning to hyperjacking as part of a larger trend of compromising network elements that have less rigorous monitoring tools than the average server or PC. But given the power of the technique—and the years of warnings—it's perhaps most surprising that it hasn't been put to malicious use earlier.

"When people first hear about virtualization technology, they always raise their eyebrows and ask, 'What happens if someone takes control of the hypervisor?'" says Mandiant's Marvi. "Now it's happened."

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HEADLINE	09/29 Covert CIA websites 'severely flawed'
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2022/sep/29/cia-websites-security-sources-communication-safety
GIST	The CIA used hundreds of websites for covert communications that were severely flawed and could have been identified by even an "amateur sleuth", according to security researchers.

The flaws reportedly led to the death of more than two dozen US sources in China in 2011 and 2012 and also reportedly led Iran to execute or imprison other CIA assets.

The new research was conducted by security experts at the Citizen Lab at the University of Toronto, which started investigating the matter after it received a tip from reporter Joel Schectmann at Reuters.

The group said it was not publishing a full detailed technical report of its findings to avoid putting CIA assets or employees at risk. But its limited findings raise serious doubts about the intelligence agency's handling of safety measures.

Using just a single website and publicly available material, Citizen Lab said it identified a network of 885 websites that it attributed "with high confidence" as having been used by the CIA. It found that the websites purported to be concerned with news, weather, healthcare and other legitimate websites.

"Knowing only one website, it is likely that while the websites were online, a motivated amateur sleuth could have mapped out the CIA network and attributed it to the US government," Citizen Lab said in a statement.

The websites were active between 2004 and 2013 and were probably not used by the CIA recently, but Citizen Lab said a subset of the websites were still linked to active intelligence employees or assets, including a foreign contractor and a current state department employee.

Citizen Lab added: "The reckless construction of this infrastructure by the CIA reportedly led directly to the identification and execution of assets, and undoubtedly risked the lives of countless other individuals. Our hope is that this research and our limited disclosure process will lead to accountability for this reckless behavior."

CIA spokesperson Tammy Kupperman Thorp said: "CIA takes its obligations to protect the people who work with us extremely seriously and we know that many of them do so bravely, at great personal risk. The notion that CIA would not work as hard as possible to safeguard them is false."

The origin of the story dates back to 2018, when reporters Jenna McLaughlin and Zach Dorfman of Yahoo News first reported that a system used by the CIA to communicate with assets had been [compromised by Iran and China](#), leading to the death of more than [two dozen sources](#) in China in 2011 and 2012. Yahoo News also reported concerns among people familiar with the breakdown that those responsible had never been held accountable.

Citizen Lab began investigating the matter when it got a tip from Schectmann of a CIA asset in Iran who had been captured and served seven years in prison after using what Citizen Lab later determined was a "fatally insecure network". Reuters [published its full report](#), America's Throwaway Spies: How the CIA failed Iranian informants in its secret war with Tehran, on Thursday.

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HEADLINE	09/29 Technology helps fuel outrage in Iran
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/09/29/world/middleeast/iran-internet-censorship.html
GIST	<p>In the physical world, Iran's authoritarian leaders answer to no one. They try, but often fail, to keep Iranians away from Western entertainment and news. Thanks to their rules, women are required to shroud their hair with head scarves, their bodies with loose clothing.</p> <p>On the internet, Iranians are often able to slip those bonds.</p> <p>They squeal over the Korean boy band BTS and the actor Timothée Chalamet. They post Instagram selfies: no head scarf, just hair. They can watch leaked videos of appalling conditions in Iranian prisons, inspect viral photos of the luxurious lives that senior officials' children are leading abroad while the economy collapses at home, read about human rights abuses, swarm politicians with questions on Twitter and jeer their supreme leader, anonymously, in comments.</p>

“In one world, the government controlled everything, and people always had to hide what they think, what they want, what they like, what they enjoy in their real life,” said Mohammad Mosaed, an Iranian investigative journalist who has been arrested twice for posting content online that the government considered objectionable.

“But on the internet, people had a chance to say what they want, to show who they really are,” he said. “And that caused conflict between the two worlds.”

Among Iranians, growing online outrage has helped fuel successive waves of protest against the autocratic clerics who rule them, culminating this month in countrywide demonstrations that have challenged the foundations of the Islamic Republic.

Though the battle is being fought with bodies in the street, with women burning their head scarves and Iranians of all classes confronting security forces, it was protesters’ phones that first swept them there.

News broke online on Sept. 16 that a young woman had died in police custody after being accused of violating Iran’s mandatory head scarf law. Within a day, a quarter-million Instagram users had joined a digital chain of Iranians posting about the woman, Mahsa Amini, and the hashtag bearing her name had been tweeted, retweeted or liked more than nine million times.

Dozens of cities have erupted in protest every night since. Security forces have killed at least 50 people, according to rights groups and arrested more than 700 people, including journalists and activists who were using social media to keep people informed.

Dozens of prominent athletes, including the national soccer teams stars Ali Karimi and Sardar Azmoun, celebrities and notable directors such as Asghar Farhadi have used social media to announce their support for the protesters in the past week. The government has said they will face repercussions, including a ban on professional activity.

The government has responded to the unrest with more than bullets, tear gas and beatings.

Nightly internet and app outages confound efforts to organize new protests and slow their momentum. But far beyond these protests, Iran’s leaders have worked for more than a decade to shore up control by building their own domestic internet, complete with copycat versions of Google and Instagram. That has put their goal of shutting out the rest of the wider internet nearly within reach.

Under Ebrahim Raisi, Iran’s new, ultraconservative president, Iran has intensified censorship, disrupting V.P.N.s, impeding the encryption on messaging apps and restricting Google searches to Safe Search, which shows only age-appropriate content for children under 13.

There are fears that a pending internet bill will block the remaining social media apps, on which an estimated 11 million Iranians rely for their livelihoods, working as influencers, selling products through Instagram and more.

Iran’s enemies are using social media in an “onslaught to distort and destroy” the clerical establishment, the country’s 83-year-old supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, warned in a February speech, calling on the authorities to regulate internet access.

“The judiciary must prevent the minds of the people from becoming worried and disturbed” by rumors and false claims on “both the media and the internet,” he said in June.

Nearly 80 percent of Iranians use some form of social media, according to a survey this year by a government-affiliated group. Even many government officials are on Twitter, even though it is banned in Iran, in a tacit acknowledgment of its reach.

Recognizing that the internet blackouts could smother the protests, the Biden administration changed regulations last week to give American tech companies more room to offer services to Iranians without running afoul of United States sanctions on Iran. But it is unclear how quickly they could act.

In a country where media outlets are tightly controlled and leaders almost never have to submit to public questioning, platforms like Twitter, Instagram and Clubhouse constitute the only means of holding the powers that be to account.

“It’s been critical for a lot of people to wake up and see what’s really going on,” said Shahin Milani, the executive director of the U.S.-based Iran Human Rights Documentation Center. “And that’s really critical because no other outlet provides that.”

Online revelations about abuses and double standards have stoked indignation and disgust among Iranians in recent years.

Some touched on the brutal crackdowns on antigovernment protests and the law that requires women to cover their bodies and hair. This summer, before Ms. Amini’s story broke, several videos circulated on social media in which Iran’s notorious morality police violently detained young women they deemed improperly covered.

But even ostensibly trivial content could draw rage.

There were the photos in April showing that the family of the country’s Parliament speaker had gone abroad to buy baby clothes at a time when most Iranians could barely afford cheap Iranian-made onesies.

And in 2017, a viral video of the son of a prominent lawmaker crediting his career success to “great genes” touched a raw nerve among those with fewer connections and more troubles.

That fall, Iranians flocked to a social media campaign with the hashtag “I regret,” uniting people who rued voting for reformist candidates who failed to enact change.

By the end of 2017, protests triggered by investments gone bad had set off nationwide protests against the government and its economic policies.

The authorities have seen the unfettered internet as a threat since 2009, when social media helped mobilize millions of Iranians in the Green Movement protests over what they believed was a rigged presidential election.

Once focused on developing a chaste domestic version of the internet, the government turned its energies to creating one it could control.

“If I didn’t have access to the internet, I’d believe everything they wanted to tell me,” said Amir Rashidi, the director of digital rights and security at Mian Group, which is based in the United States and supports human rights groups in Iran. “So they realized, that’s where they’re being hit and they need to control it.”

Under former President Hassan Rouhani, a relative moderate in office from 2013 until last year, restrictions that capped internet speed were lifted and mobile internet took off. Mr. Rouhani also talked of allowing Western tech companies such as Twitter into the country under China-style conditions that would require them to impose user restrictions.

But stringent U.S. sanctions on Iran over its nuclear program made Silicon Valley reluctant or unable to work with Iran.

Instead, Iran built its own versions of Google, Instagram, WhatsApp and more, making sure the content was to its liking.

Statistics from Iran's own app stores, however, show that only a few million people in a country of about 85 million have downloaded them. Researchers say that is partly because of concerns about government surveillance.

And Iranians keep finding ways into the wider internet: About 80 percent of Iranians rely on virtual private networks and proxies for access, a lawmaker told state media in July.

"Iranians also see how the rest of the world lives and want that too," said Holly Dages, an Iranian-American senior fellow at the Atlantic Council who has written a report on Iranians' use of social media. "But more importantly, it's the only way for their voices to be heard."

Now, when the broader internet goes dark, Iran's National Information Network stays up, enticing Iranians to migrate. State television has taken to promoting the homegrown apps during the current protests, informing viewers that while foreign apps must be regulated to prevent the "rioters" from doing further damage, the public is free to use their Iranian versions.

One solution, Iranian activists say, is for American tech companies to re-enter the field in Iran after backing away when President Donald J. Trump imposed tougher American sanctions on Iran.

Signal, a secure messaging app, said it and volunteer users were working to devise alternative ways of accessing and distributing Signal, but it had encountered hurdles, including Iranian telecommunications companies preventing validation codes from being delivered over text. Google said it was working on technical adjustments to help with access. But more sweeping solutions did not appear forthcoming.

"The main tool that we have to combat" Iranian government controls, Mr. Rashidi said, "is breaking the isolation."

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HEADLINE	09/29 CISA growing field force in Seattle
SOURCE	https://www.king5.com/article/news/local/seattle/us-cyber-defense-agency-seattle-data-breach/281-0cd7e7bd-d575-44c1-93d8-ec3dac0ba6e6
GIST	<p>SEATTLE — From the way we get gas at the pump, food at the store, to our water and power, it's all digitally connected and vulnerable to cyber threats.</p> <p>Earlier this year, 650,000 people were impacted after a data breach at the Washington State Department of Licensing.</p> <p>"Those entities are what I call target rich, resource-poor," said Jen Easterly, the Director of the nation's Cyber Defense Agency or CISA.</p> <p>Easterly heads the federal government's newest agency and is growing a field force in Seattle to better help local and state governments protect critical infrastructure.</p> <p>"It's those entities that we need to work hand in hand with to provide them no-cost services to provide them the support and resources and capabilities to defend themselves," Easterly said.</p> <p>Easterly met with various agencies this week including public utilities and King County's Election director as threats to election infrastructure are increasing.</p> <p>"To ensure that Americans and people here in King County can have confidence when they go to the ballot box in the security and integrity of that process," said Easterly.</p> <p>CISA also works with major companies like Amazon. The industry giant is working to develop a curriculum for kids K-12 to become cyber security savvy.</p>

	<p>“The fundamentals for cybersecurity are something that we should be teaching children, how to protect yourself online and how to prevent somebody from taking advantage of you,” said Steve Schmidt, Chief Security Officer, Amazon.</p> <p>Amazon said it wants people to have access to cyber security skills to grow their careers. It has invested 1.2 billion dollars in free training for its employees and hundreds of millions of dollars to provide free cloud computing skills training for 29 million people.</p> <p>At Amazon headquarters Thursday, industry, academia, and the government discussed how to teach kids about cyber security and create a future pipeline of workers to fill 700,000 jobs.</p> <p>“Build those kind of skills that help people protect themselves better and also find a career that's going to give them a rewarding engaging opportunity and some pretty well-paid jobs on the other end of it if they decide to go that route,” said Schmidt.</p> <p>Cyber defense leaders say the earlier the better to build a future workforce to defend the nation.</p> <p>“Cyber is not the scary technical thing, but something that’s fun and cool and something you can turn into an actual career,” said Easterly.</p>
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HEADLINE	09/28 Crooks exploit public online, offline data
SOURCE	https://www.csoonline.com/article/3674770/how-cybercriminals-use-public-online-and-offline-data-to-target-employees.html
GIST	<p>We post our daily lives to social media and think nothing of making key details about our lives public. We need to reconsider what we share online and how attackers can use this information to target businesses. Your firm’s security may be one text message away from a breach.</p> <p>How and why attackers target new employees</p> <p>For example, a firm onboards a new intern and provides them with keys to the office building, logins to the network, and an email address. It’s normal for employees to also have personal email and cellphones. Depending on the size of the firm, if you use multifactor authentication, you also deploy two-factor tokens or applications to their cellphones or provide them with a work phone. The first few days on the job can be hectic, with a lot of new technology to deal with. It can be overwhelming as well as stressful as the eager new hire wants to settle into the job and be accommodating.</p> <p>It's also a time that attackers try to take advantage of. They look for eager workers trying to please their new bosses. The other day, my firm experienced first-hand how these attackers go after new hires as they settle into the corporate environment. The emails started innocently enough. An email from someone asking the intern to assist them with a project and a deadline. The email said that they were in a closed-door meeting. The request was that they needed a task completely swiftly. The email ended asking for the intern to “Kindly forward your mobile cell number as soon as possible.”</p> <p>How do attackers learn about new employees? They start with the tools we use to connect in business to make the phish more personal. Monitoring business sites such as LinkedIn, the attackers made the connection between a newly hired accounting intern and a partner at my office. They built the email to look like it was coming from the partner asking the intern to assist them. Once again, they asked them to provide a cellphone number so they could send them a text message.</p> <p>Three times these emails came into our business email and were not identified as junk email or identified by our mail filtering tools as phishing lures. The email didn’t have enough triggers and it made it cleanly through all the protections of email and endpoint detection and response (EDR) measures we have in place.</p> <p>Attackers targeted Uber, Twilio employees</p>

The recent [Uber](#) breach was apparently triggered because an attacker tricked an admin into approving a fake multifactor authentication (MFA) request. The attacker asked the admin over WhatsApp to provide more information to gain their trust and approve the MFA request. It's unclear if the attacker used social media tools to gain more information or targeted the Admin or got lucky.

Twilio recently shared that [attackers targeted](#) its employees and were able to match employee names from sources with their phone numbers. The attackers were able to make a one-to-one relationship using publicly available databases to target the attacks.

How to mitigate social media-enabled attacks

Rachel Tobac of SocialProof Security confirmed [on Twitter](#) that attackers are using business tools to target both larger entities as well as small- to medium-sized enterprises. She recommended that firms no longer list or connect to new hires on LinkedIn and use data-removal services to pull information out of databases maintained by LinkedIn and others.

Having been on the receiving end of data-removal requests, I have found that removal requests might expose more information than was in the database in the first place. A site might only have email addresses, but the data-removal request exposes the user's full name as well. Consider the reputation of the sites and their track record of data removal. So much information is now online and buried in so many locations that I'm not convinced that we can truly scrub ourselves from the web.

As you onboard new employees, make them aware of these types of attacks and the risks to the firm. Urge new hires to not post about their new jobs or roles or limit the posting to only trusted connections. Employees should know exactly what communication from the firm will look like and what methods will be used. Have your information security team prepare "what if" tabletop exercises to ensure that staff know how to appropriately respond to security prompts. Make them aware that attackers may be targeting anyone in the firm to gain access.

Attackers use data shared in the real world, too

Sharing too much personal information is not just an online problem. Even driving around in our cars we expose a great deal of information. Have a bumper sticker on your car showcasing that your child is on the honor roll? You just broadcast where your children attend school. Got a personalized plate? It's easier for someone to remember if they want to track you or your car. Got a sticker on your car that you like to ski or any other expensive sport? You may be showcasing that you have expensive equipment in your car, or in your home as well as being away from your house often on the weekends. Have a parking pass or other identification sticker on your car that identifies where you work? Consider how much your car can identify who you are and what you do to someone trying to target your firm.

Too often in technology we are conditioned to go around barriers as best as we can to get the job done. This sets users up to fall for targeted attacks. If attackers know enough about you or your behavior, they can target the attack accordingly. Take the time to not just roll out technological barriers but provide education and training. Remember, if your entire infrastructure can be compromised because a random user makes a bad decision, the problem isn't necessarily with the user. It's because you've set up your processes to fail and haven't helped them make the right one.

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Terrorism, Extremism

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HEADLINE	09/29 Nigeria: 2,295 teachers lost lives to terror
SOURCE	https://allafrica.com/stories/202209300036.html
GIST	The Registrar/Chief Executive, Teachers Registration Council of Nigeria (TRCN), Prof. Olusegun Ajiboye, has said 2,295 teachers have lost their lives to terrorism and insurgency in the North-east.

This is just as he disclosed that over 1,500 schools have been forced to close down in the region between 2009 and 2022.

Ajiboye, while speaking at the Nigeria Union of Teachers (NUT) National Delegates Conference held in Ibadan Thursday, described the loss of the teachers as tragic, adding that 1.2 million students require emergency education in Borno, Adamawa and Yobe States.

The TRCN boss also disclosed that over 910 schools have either been damaged or destroyed, noting that the world is grappling with terrorism which has dealt a serious blow on every facet of the economy including education.

While urging the federal government to review its security architecture to address the deteriorating security situation because of its effect on education, he stated that he is willing to continue to champion the professionalism and welfare of teachers in the country.

He said: "Government should implement fully the safe schools declaration guidelines endorsed by Nigeria in 2015 and ratified by President Muhammadu Buhari in 2019."

Ajiboye, who lamented that over 600,000 students have lost access to education, said the "attacks on education create a ripple effect, setting in motion range of negative impacts such as loss of education, early marriage, early pregnancy and stigma associated with sexual violence and children's born from rape all of which can dramatically affect female students futures.

"The presence of armed forces in and near schools can make it a target of retaliatory attacks increasing the risk to children and teachers as well as the likelihood that education will be disrupted".

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HEADLINE	09/29 Afghan resistance: 'no option' but war
SOURCE	https://foreignpolicy.com/2022/09/29/afghanistan-taliban-resistance-terrorism-jihad/
GIST	<p>Afghanistan is now perhaps the most dangerous country in the world, controlled by Taliban terrorists who are sheltering dozens of anti-Western jihadi groups while torturing, raping, starving, and killing their Afghan opponents. Yet the one person who could make a credible claim to be the leader of an opposition group to overthrow the Taliban has been unable to draw international support or unite fellow Afghans behind him.</p> <p>Ahmad Massoud, the 33-year-old son of an anti-Taliban war hero, leads the National Resistance Front (NRF), which is concentrated in the Panjshir Valley, a lush and mountainous province close to the capital, Kabul, where the Taliban have been struggling to dislodge them in the year since they took control of Afghanistan. The NRF is one of at least 22 resistance groups the United Nations says have emerged since the Taliban's takeover last year. A few thousand men are fighting in disparate groups, taking and holding territory in a dozen provinces mainly across the north, where anti-Taliban sentiment is strongest. But they've yet to form a cohesive opposition to the Taliban, who have an increasingly tenuous hold on power as factional feuds emerge and international legitimacy remains elusive.</p> <p>Not that the Afghan resistance is getting any help from Washington. The Biden administration has insisted it will not support an armed opposition and seems to regard the Taliban—led by dozens of sanctioned terrorists—as partners in counterterrorism rather than part of the problem.</p> <p>Despite repeated warnings of the Taliban's long-standing relationship with al Qaeda and its affiliates, the world only just awoke to the danger, Massoud said, when a U.S. drone killed al Qaeda's leader, Ayman al-Zawahiri, in a Kabul villa associated with Taliban deputy leader and interior minister Sirajuddin Haqqani. "Now the world is paying attention," Massoud told <i>Foreign Policy</i> during a recent trip to Europe. "Afghanistan is turning into a hub for terrorism. And the goal of this terrorism is not to only have Afghanistan; the idea is to spread worldwide." Afghanistan is a recruitment and training center, he said, where terrorist groups teach skills like bomb-making "in the languages of Central Asia." The killing of</p>

Zawahiri, he said, brought home to countries like Qatar, Pakistan, Russia, China, Uzbekistan, and Tajikistan that “the export of terrorism has already started.”

Like many Afghans, Massoud finds it difficult to understand U.S. policy toward the Taliban. “It’s very confusing and will leave a very bad stain on the reputation of the United States as a great country which always stands for great values,” he said. “I believe it is happening because it is cheaper [than an armed presence], but it is a catastrophic mistake.” He pointed to the consequences from the last time Washington ignored a Taliban power grab in the 1990s: A few years later, the Taliban’s guest, al Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden, launched the 9/11 attacks on New York and Washington.

“We had the experience in the ’90s of not paying attention to the situation. And it can be catastrophic again,” he said.

Massoud’s inability to forge a united opposition in the year since the Taliban’s takeover isn’t due to a lack of name recognition. Massoud regularly invokes the name of his late father, Ahmad Shah Massoud, who led the Northern Alliance in its fight to keep substantial swaths of territory out of Taliban hands the last time they ruled Afghanistan from 1996 to 2001. The elder Massoud was assassinated by al Qaeda two days before the huge attacks on the United States that sparked the U.S.-led invasion of Afghanistan and the ousting of the Taliban.

After the fall of the Afghan republic, he said he tried and failed to negotiate his inclusion into Afghanistan’s government with Taliban leaders. He is now based, alongside other NRF figures, in neighboring Tajikistan, from where he travels widely to drum up support, arms, and money. But he has assumed a Ernesto “Che” Guevara air rather than becoming the fulcrum of an effective anti-Taliban opposition.

And there are blocks to build on. In many regions of the country, the NRF fights alongside the Afghanistan Freedom Front (AFF), which is led by Lt. Gen. Yasin Zia, a former Afghan deputy defense minister and chief of the general staff. Like Massoud, he travels widely, pleading the case for support to dislodge the Taliban. But he describes a *Catch-22*: Without victories, the resistance cannot attract arms and funding; without arms and funding, victory over the Taliban will be difficult.

Demonstrating the fundamental problem of the anti-Taliban resistance, Zia said he and Massoud have not met. Massoud and Zia stand out as patriotic democrats, but neither have grabbed the imagination of Afghanistan’s war-weary people or governments whose support they need to win a war both say is now the only option.

“We could win a big uprising, but only if we come together,” Zia said. “Brother Massoud” has the ability, charisma, and recognition inside and outside Afghanistan to build a team. “Anti-Taliban groups say they are working for the good of the people. We all say that we want democracy; there is no difference between us and our aims. But if we work individually and independently, it will take too long. Only by bringing our resources together will we be able to bring changes on the ground.” Along with others who claim to have the best interest of their country at heart, it seems they’re just too busy pursuing their own interests to pool resources—an enduring condition of Afghan leadership that arguably led to the fall of the republic.

Despite the Biden administration’s hands-off approach, both NRF and AFF leaders say they are getting some support. Both are attracting former members of the U.S.- and NATO-trained Afghan army, special forces, and police, as well as financial support from diaspora Afghans. And on Capitol Hill, there has been a smattering of support for the Afghan resistance among top lawmakers, including Sen. [Lindsey Graham](#), who has advocated for both Massoud and his NRF colleague, former Afghan Vice President Amrullah Saleh.

But Massoud and Saleh recently met with Russian President Vladimir Putin in an effort to build a regional support base, according to a source who accompanied them, in a move that could lead to a backlash for the resistance in Europe and on Capitol Hill, as Russia’s war in Ukraine deepens economic hardship for hundreds of millions of people worldwide.

	<p>Still, the Taliban's support for terror is wiping off any lingering smiles among countries that cheered the Taliban's rise and America's ignominious departure. Pakistan supported the Taliban's insurgency, but it is now a target of their terrorist partner Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan, which seeks the overthrow of the Pakistani state and enjoys safe haven in Afghanistan. China's demand that the Taliban eliminate the anti-Beijing Turkistan Islamic Party (formerly the East Turkestan Islamic Movement) has gone unheeded. Central Asia fears a variety of Taliban allies, including the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan and Jamaat Ansarullah, which targets Tajikistan. But none of this has stopped China, Russia, and Pakistan from pursuing economic opportunities with the Taliban, their lack of legitimacy notwithstanding. Russia just inked a provisional deal on oil, gas, and wheat supplies; China is keen on minerals, including gold, uranium, and lithium; and Pakistan is getting cheap coal.</p> <p>Even as he struggles to win international support and unify the resistance, Massoud said the Taliban "leave us with no option" but war.</p> <p>"I believe that even with the slightest support of the world, we will be able to liberate some portion of our country because the people are not happy. The people are not with the Taliban," Massoud said. "By establishing a fair, just, democratic system that will be a role model for the rest of the country and attract internal migration so people do not have to leave Afghanistan, this will encourage more people to rise against the Taliban's tyranny and authoritarianism. Then resistance will continue and will grow stronger."</p>
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HEADLINE	09/29 Extremist recruiters target young gamers
SOURCE	https://wdet.org/2022/09/29/1update-report-shows-extremist-recruiters-are-targeting-young-gamers/
GIST	<p>Young gamers are being recruited by right-wing extremists on Twitch.</p> <p>The Extremism and Gaming Research Network (EGRN) recently published a 129-page report that goes over research from the early 2000s through August 2021, concluding that neo-Nazis, far-right groups and ISIS are using video games as recruitment tools for radicalizing young people into extremist organizations.</p> <p>EGRN cites that extremist recruiters tend to use games that have a large social aspect to them, such as Fortnite, League of Legends and World of Warcraft. They may use slurs and jokes as trash talk to find who is susceptible, then move the conversation to a more unregulated platform.</p>
	Return to Top <i>Click on source link to listen: How gaming-related platforms are responding to extremist recruitment.</i>

HEADLINE	09/30 Pakistan: bombing in a sweet shop kills 1
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/nation-world/bombing-inside-pakistani-sweets-shop-kills-1-wounds-14/
GIST	<p>QUETTA, Pakistan (AP) — A bomb exploded inside a sweet shop in southwestern Pakistan on Friday, killing at least one person and wounding 14 others, officials said.</p> <p>The bombing happened in the town of Kohlu in Baluchistan province, according to district administrator Qurban Ali. He said authorities transported the victims to a nearby hospital and police were investigating.</p> <p>Provincial Home Minister Ziaullah Langu condemned the bombing and said he had ordered a probe into the incident.</p> <p>There was no immediate claim of responsibility for the bombing, but previous such attacks have been blamed on militants and separatists.</p> <p>Baluchistan has been the scene of a long-running insurgency by Baluch secessionist groups that for decades have staged bombings and shooting attacks on civilians and security forces to press their demands for independence.</p>

	The Pakistani Taliban and the Islamic State group also have a presence in the province. Islamabad insists that Pakistani forces have quelled the insurgency in Baluchistan, but violence has continued there.
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HEADLINE	09/30 Taliban: suicide bombing in Kabul kills 19
SOURCE	https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2022/sep/30/taliban-say-suicide-bombing-in-shiite-area-of-kabul/
GIST	<p>KABUL, Afghanistan (AP) — A suicide bomber struck an education center in a Shiite area of the Afghan capital on Friday, killing 19 people and wounding 27, a Taliban-appointed spokesman for the Kabul police chief said.</p> <p>The explosion inside the center in the Dashti Barchi neighborhood of Kabul — populated mostly by members of Afghanistan’s minority Shiite community — took place in the morning hours, said the spokesman, Khalid Zadran.</p> <p>The victims included high school graduates, both girls and boys, who were taking a practice university entrance exam when the blast went off, Zadran said. The center is known as the Kaaj Higher Educational Center and helps students prepare and study for college entrance exams, among its activities.</p> <p>Zadran said education centers in the area will need to ask the Taliban for additional security when they host events with big gatherings, such as the study prep on Friday.</p> <p>One eyewitness, 19-year-old high school student Shafi Akbary, had been attending the center for the past six months. The center had invited students to come at around 6:30 a.m. on Friday for the practice exam, and Akbary said around 300 students were present.</p> <p>“First, we heard the sounds of a few gunshots at the main gate. Everyone was worried and tried to run to a different direction. Soon after that, a huge explosion occurred inside the center,” said Akbary, speaking to The Associated Press over the phone..</p> <p>Akbary, who was unharmed in the explosion, said he saw dozens of bodies and wounded people scattered around him. “I was so afraid and couldn’t even move myself to help them. Later, other people ran inside and took us out,” he added.</p> <p>The suicide bombing was the latest in a steady stream of violence since the Taliban seized power. No one immediately claimed responsibility for the attack</p> <p>The Islamic State group - the chief rival of the Taliban since their takeover of Afghanistan in August 2021 - has in the past targeted the Hazara community, including in Dashti Barchi.</p> <p>“Our teams have dispatched at the site of the blast to find out more details,” Abdul Nafi Takor, a Taliban-appointed spokesman for the Interior Ministry, said earlier.</p> <p>The U.S. chargé d’affaires for Afghanistan, Karen Decker, condemned the attack in a tweet.</p> <p>“Targeting a room full of students taking exams is shameful; all students should be able to pursue an education in peace & without fear,” she said. “We hope for a swift recovery for the victims & we grieve with the families of the deceased.”</p> <p>Afghanistan’s Hazaras, who are mostly Shiite Muslims, have been the target of a brutal campaign of violence for the past several years, blamed on the regional affiliate of the Islamic State group. Militants have carried out several deadly attacks in Dashti Barchi, including a horrific 2020 attack on a maternity hospital that killed 24 people, including newborn babies and mothers.</p> <p>The United Nations children’s fund said it was appalled by Friday’s horrific attack, adding that violence in or around educational establishments was never acceptable.</p>

	“This heinous act claimed the lives of dozens of adolescent girls and boys and severely injured many more,” UNICEF tweeted. “Children and adolescents are not, and must never be, the target of violence.”
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Suspicious, Unusual

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HEADLINE	09/29 Climate change destroying ancient ruins
SOURCE	https://www.wired.com/story/drought-destroying-ancient-ruins/
GIST	<p>THE NIZARI GARRISON at Gird Castle resisted the Mongol horde of Hulagu Khan for 17 years before surrendering in December 1270. The fortress rose 300 meters above the surrounding plains of present-day eastern Iran, with three rings of fortifications enclosing its base. But dwindling supplies and an outbreak of cholera forced the defenders to abandon their posts after one of the longest sieges in medieval history.</p> <p>Eight hundred years later, the remaining fortifications at Gird Castle face the onslaught of a new invader: sand. For the past three months, Bijan Rouhani, an archaeologist at the University of Oxford, has been monitoring about 700 sites in Iran’s Sistan region using satellite imagery. His comparison of US intelligence photos taken in 1977 and Google Earth’s most recent images of the area shows the advance of vast dunes that now almost bury the fortress at Gird.</p> <p>This summer, drought has revealed a number of previously hidden archaeological sites as low water levels have allowed archaeologists to access historic ruins in Spain, Iraq, and China. But just as climate change giveth, so it taketh away: Rising heat is damaging some ancient sites and spurring desertification that is burying others, Gird Castle among them. It is a growing problem with few proven solutions.</p> <p>“We can see many other sites from the Bronze Age to the Islamic periods in the area, as well as ancient rivers and canals,” says Rouhani. “Most of these sites are now buried under sand and impacted by the 120-day sand wind every year.”</p> <p>The ancient city of Zahedan Kohneh has suffered the same fate as Gird Castle. It was Sistan’s capital when Gird fell to the Mongols and was once one of the largest cities in Iran—today it is draped in a growing garment of sand.</p> <p>Archaeologists monitoring sites in other regions, countries, and continents report similar stories. Ahmed Mutasim Abdalla Mahmoud, a researcher specializing in sand movement at the University of Nottingham, says sand poses the biggest threat to Sudan’s Nubian pyramids, built around 4,500 years ago. He warns that the 200 pyramids at El Kurru, Jebel Barkal, and Meroe on the Nile River could soon disappear beneath sand.</p> <p>“The threat has been exacerbated by climate change, which has made the land more arid and sandstorms more frequent,” he writes on the Conversation. “Moving sands can engulf entire houses in rural Sudan, and cover fields, irrigation canals, and riverbanks.”</p> <p>Mahmoud and other archaeologists concede that people in these areas have struggled with encroaching sand dunes for millennia. But climate scientists leave no doubt that human activity is increasing the speed of desertification. Some forecast that at the current rate, emissions will lead the Middle East and North Africa region to heat by 4 degrees Celsius within the next 30 years. These rising temperatures cause drought, and drought transforms land into desert. Over two-thirds of Iran’s land mass now shows “high” or “very high” susceptibility to desertification.</p> <p>Some archaeologists suggest that sand inundation could protect sites from looters and exposure to harsh weather. Many sites that are already buried have survived for millennia because of this. But Michael Fradley, an archaeologist specializing in the Arabian Peninsula at the University of Oxford, believes rapid changes in the environment will cause more damage to sites than any supposed benefits that might help</p>

save them. “The stability that has maintained these sites for millennia is changing,” he says. “Even if a site isn’t completely covered, the constant changing starts to break structures apart, whether it be a single brick or an entire settlement.”

Sites beyond the reach of advancing dunes can also still suffer the effects of severe drought. Drought decreases the amount of water flowing down rivers, and this [reduces](#) the sediment supplied to estuaries, where it would otherwise build up along the coast and act as a buffer against erosion. Coastal sites lose their protection in this way.

A group of Iranian and French researchers studied Iran’s ancient port city of Siraf in 2018 to measure the consequences of this effect. Siraf acted as [an important link](#) between the Islamic world and Eastern lands like China as far back as 1,800 years ago. Later it became [an enormous trading hub](#), where merchants also brought gemstones, ivory, ebony, paper, sandalwood, drugs, pearls, and spices from Africa and India. The researchers discovered that the waters of the Persian Gulf were grinding [almost half of the coastline](#) at Siraf into the sea. This had already led to “widespread and archaeologically significant damage” to its old city walls, the potters’ quarter, great mosque, and ancient bazaar. The team posited the reduction in coastal sediment supply as a principal reason. Nick Marriner, a researcher from the University of France-Comté who worked on the project, says this year’s severe droughts have accelerated the erosion.

Coastal erosion threatens archaeological sites on every continent. Sixty percent of Africa’s 284 coastal sites of “outstanding universal value” [could be at risk](#) from a one-in-100-year extreme coastal event by 2050. And 42 of Europe’s Unesco World Heritage Sites in low-lying coastal regions of the Mediterranean are [at risk of erosion](#). “Current climate change projections, coupled with human impacts, mean that the future is bleak for the ancient remains of many archaeologically rich coastal sites,” Marriner says.

Archaeologists have few tools to prevent the destruction resulting from drought; budgets already strain to protect the most important sites. Building a sea wall that might save coastal sites like the ancient port at Siraf [would cost](#) at least \$400,000 per kilometer. That’s out of the question, Marriner says.

The most effective protection measures would be those that prevent drought in the first place. This demands first an immediate reduction in the human greenhouse gas emissions that warm the Earth and stimulate desertification. Governments must also develop more sustainable water policies and settle disputes over water with their neighbors to lessen the impact of drought. Iraq’s government, [for example](#), claims that immense damming projects in Turkey and Iran will reduce water flowing down the Tigris and Euphrates rivers by 60 percent in the next 14 years. Jaafar Jotheri, a professor of geoarchaeology at the University of Al-Qadisiyah in Iraq, says this forces farmers to exploit salty underground reservoirs to spray their crops. Wind then blows the salt onto Iraq’s multitude of archaeological sites, some as old as 5,000 years, and permeates their semi-organic mud bricks. The bricks crumble. Jotheri says the salt can invade foundations by capillary action alone.

“We will lose our archaeological sites 100 percent,” he says. “I mean totally lose them because they will be covered by sand. The rest will be destroyed by the wind, temperature, and salt.”

Archaeologists can try to convince governments to consider physical heritage in their environmental policies. People, however, must come first. Drought has already forced Iranians to [abandon](#) 1,700 villages in South Khorasan, the region on Sistan’s northern border. Those may soon join the ruins of ancient civilizations beneath the dunes of sand.

For now, researchers can focus only on documenting as many affected sites as possible. Both Rouhani and Fradley work for the Endangered Archaeology in the Middle East and North Africa project at Oxford, which has developed a public database of over 333,000 sites across 20 countries and encourages other archaeologists to contribute their own data. Sand might entomb even the tallest spires and citadels, but thanks to the project’s work, we’ll at least know where to dig.

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SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2022/sep/29/arctic-ocean-acidifying-up-to-four-times-as-fast-as-other-oceans-study-finds
GIST	<p>Acidification of the western Arctic Ocean is happening three to four times faster than in other ocean basins, a new study has found.</p> <p>The ocean, which absorbs a third of all of the carbon dioxide in the atmosphere, has grown more acidic because of fossil fuel use. Rapid loss of sea ice in the Arctic region over the past three decades has accelerated the rate of long-term acidification, according to the study, published in Science on Thursday.</p> <p>Researchers from the Polar and Marine Research Institute at Jimei University, China, and the School of Marine Science and Policy at the University of Delaware in the US, say rapid sea-ice loss exposes seawater to the atmosphere, promoting takeup of carbon dioxide at a faster rate than in the Atlantic, Pacific, Indian, Antarctic and sub-Antarctic basins.</p> <p>“In other ocean systems, acidification is being driven by an increase in atmospheric carbon dioxide, which is increasing at a rate of around 2ppm [parts per million] per year,” said Wei-Jun Cai, a marine chemistry expert at the University of Delaware and one of the paper’s authors.</p> <p>Acidification trends tend to follow those predicted from carbon dioxide increases over time, he said. But when the scientists compared data collected from the Arctic between 1994 and 2020 with ocean basins elsewhere, they found acidification was happening much faster in the Arctic.</p> <p>“We were shocked to see acidification is happening three to four times faster,” Cai said.</p> <p>If sea ice continues to vanish in the western Arctic, the process could continue and intensify over the next few decades, the scientists predict.</p> <p>The research follows a separate study in August, which found that the Arctic has warmed at about four times the global average rate over the past 43 years. The faster warming, known as Arctic amplification, is a feedback process driven by melting sea ice, which is also driving faster acidification, the researchers say.</p> <p>“The ice melt dilutes or lowers the alkalinity of the seawater. This dilutes the buffering capacity of the water, its ability to resist acidification,” Cai said.</p> <p>The effect of the altered seawater chemistry will have “huge implications” for sea life, Cai predicts. As an example, he referred to studies that show ocean acidification is a threat to coral reefs.</p> <p>“In lower latitudes, you have coral reefs and if you add carbon dioxide to the water, the carbon saturation rate will increase and the coral won’t grow,” he said. Acidification reduces the carbonate ions needed to build coral skeletons.</p> <p>The lower pH, or acidity, of seawater could affect many systems, and could even make some metals more toxic, he added.</p> <p>“We are far from knowing what the cost is for biological systems. We don’t know what organisms could be affected. This is something the biological community needs to look into.”</p>
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HEADLINE	09/29 DHS workers took jobless aid while working
SOURCE	https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2022/sep/29/hundreds-dhs-employees-took-pandemic-unemployment-/
GIST	Hundreds of Homeland Security employees were paid unemployment benefits during the coronavirus pandemic despite staying on the job, the department’s inspector general revealed Thursday.

Even worse, the Department of Homeland Security paid some of the money itself under an emergency unemployment program that the Trump administration “hastily” created in 2020, investigators said. That meant the department was making bogus payments to its employees.

The audit is the latest to ding the federal government over its reckless pace of pandemic spending. Uncle Sam spat out \$3 trillion in just four months as the spread of COVID-19 sent the country into shutdown mode.

The Homeland Security inspector general identified nearly 2,400 claims from department employees and found about 600 of them were clearly eligible. Roughly 900 others were deemed “potentially” ineligible, and the remaining 900 or so were definitely ineligible, the inspector general said.

Some may have been cases of identity fraud, with someone filing a bogus claim in the name of an unsuspecting employee. Other cases appear to be old-fashioned double-dipping.

Nearly three dozen employees even filed unemployment claims from Homeland Security computer systems, suggesting they were on the job at the exact time they were claiming unemployment.

In 366 cases, pay records showed that employees received unemployment benefits even though they were not just working but also putting in overtime or extra shifts. One employee averaged 147 hours of work per two-week pay period while the department was also paying unemployment.

Sen. Rob Portman of Ohio, the top Republican on the Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee, said he was “alarmed” by the findings.

“If these allegations are correct, those in charge of protecting our homeland were exploiting it for personal gain,” he said.

He asked the Justice Department to pursue action against any employees who were double-dipping.

Federal prosecutors brought hundreds of pandemic unemployment fraud cases, though they focused on people who stole large numbers of identities and filed claims using those names.

Estimates of unemployment fraud run to more than \$200 billion, out of nearly \$800 billion spent.

Much of that was orchestrated by “organized crime rings,” the inspector general said.

Fraud also struck the government’s loan programs at the Small Business Administration. The Paycheck Protection Program and Economic Injury Disaster Loans totaled \$1.35 trillion, according to the Committee for a Responsible Federal Budget’s COVID-19 money tracker.

In a report released Thursday, the SBA inspector general reported that the agency made Economic Injury Disaster Loan payments to companies that didn’t exist before the pandemic started — a violation of the rules.

The SBA said it would review the applications that the audit flagged and would refer cases for investigation and prosecution.

The Homeland Security inspector general’s report focused specifically on an emergency unemployment program that the Trump administration created at the Federal Emergency Management Agency in the summer of 2020.

Congress created a \$600-a-week additional unemployment benefit at the start of the pandemic. Lawmakers couldn’t agree on an extension, so the administration used disaster money at FEMA to add six weeks of benefits at either \$300 or \$400 a week.

Like the main unemployment program, the federal money went to states' workforce agencies, which distributed the payments.

Like the main pandemic unemployment program, the FEMA program was rife with fraud, the inspector general concluded. In a report this month, investigators identified roughly 10% of the FEMA unemployment money that showed signs of improper payments.

Thursday's report put a fine point on the matter. Investigators found problems inside Homeland Security, which oversees FEMA.

The audit said "FEMA overly relied" on the existing unemployment system, which had serious weaknesses. FEMA also didn't require states to impose critical fraud checks before spending the money.

Roughly 770 employees at the Transportation Security Administration received unemployment benefits, but only about 150 were deemed clearly eligible.

At FEMA, more than 1,100 employees were paid. Just 400 of those claims were deemed clearly eligible, and 111 of those were probably fraudulent.

All told, the department paid \$2.6 million in disaster unemployment benefits to employees who weren't clearly eligible.

Jim H. Crumpacker, Homeland Security's liaison to the inspector general, said in an official reply to the report that FEMA had to rush to create the emergency unemployment program in August 2020 and made its first payment just six days after President Trump established the program.

Mr. Crumpacker said the inspector general ignored anti-fraud efforts at the department.

The inspector general said those were implemented too late.

"FEMA's policies did not require [state workforce agencies] to implement controls to prevent fraud from occurring; instead, they focused on detecting fraud after the fraudulent activity already occurred," the audit said.

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HEADLINE	09/29 Orca pod falls to lowest number in 46yrs
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/southern-resident-orca-pod-falls-to-lowest-number-in-46-years/
GIST	<p>Only 73 southern resident orcas remain along the coast of Oregon, Washington and British Columbia as of July 1, according to the latest census from the Center for Whale Research.</p> <p>That's one of the lowest population counts among the J, K and L pods of whales since 1974, when 71 orcas were counted following a live-capture fishery in the 1960s, according to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. The population peaked at 98 in 1995, but declined by almost 20% in the late '90s, leaving 80 whales in 2001.</p> <p>In 2020, 72 southern resident killer whales were tallied.</p> <p>In the last year, three whales died — K21, K44 and L89. Two calves were born in February and April. K20's calf was the first baby the K pod has seen in 11 years.</p> <p>The census found the L pod, composed of 32 orcas, at its lowest point since the study began in 1976. The K pod is at its lowest in the last two decades, at 16 whales.</p> <p>The J pod saw no deaths and now totals 25.</p>

“The continued decline of L and K are both really concerning,” said Michael Weiss, research director for the Center for Whale Research. “It’s hard to say why one is OK and the others aren’t.”

The southern residents live in matriarchal families split in three pods: the J pod, K pod and L pod. They typically stay along the western coastal islands of Canada, Washington and the Oregon Coast.

At the top of the food chain, the southern residents have an important role in the ecosystem.

In 2005, the southern residents were listed as endangered under the [Endangered Species Act](#) and a [recovery plan](#) was finished in 2008.

In 2015, they became one of NOAA’s “Species in the Spotlight,” an effort to raise awareness and save “the most highly at-risk marine species.”

“The population has been sort of fluctuating along, and the way we’re trending now is in decline,” said Brad Hanson, a NOAA wildlife biologist. “It’s one of these situations where we don’t necessarily understand why we’re losing some of these animals.”

Generally, the southern residents are struggling to survive in the face of [at least three threats](#): lack of Chinook salmon in their foraging range, pollution and underwater noise that makes it harder for them to hunt.

The salmon supply could be one reason some pods are faring better than others. The different pods have different “movement patterns” and thus differences in the salmon runs they rely on, Center for Whale Research’s Weiss said.

Former Lummi Nation chair Jay Julius, 47, said he remembers when the orcas were “plentiful.”

He grew up fishing side-by-side with the southern residents on the west side of the San Juan Islands. Then, he said, the orcas weren’t thought of as dwindling.

Now, Chinook salmon, the southern residents’ [primary food source](#), are in decline. Under 500,000 adult Chinook [were estimated](#) to have passed through the Salish Sea in 2018 — a 60% reduction since 1984.

Today, human interests, like agriculture and development, have taken precedence over killer whales.

Estuaries — a refuge for growing juvenile salmon — were diked and drained to create farmland. Freeways, cities and neighborhoods were built atop wetlands.

Critical habitat for orcas’ prey needs to be recovered, said Ken Balcomb, founder of the Center for Whale Research.

Before those conservation goals are met, the southern resident population could possibly plunge below two dozen, he said.

As long as there are a few females capable of reproduction, it’ll be possible to maintain the population, Balcomb said. [Recent births](#) among the southern residents have skewed heavily male.

The center’s census details the fate of the orcas lost this year. K21 was last seen “severely emaciated” in the Strait of Juan de Fuca in July 2021. He was declared dead after he failed to appear alongside others he socialized with.

K44 was alive as of this spring, but was not seen in subsequent encounters with his family. According to the center, the body of a juvenile killer whale with markings consistent with K44 was found entangled in what appeared to be crabbing gear off the Oregon Coast in late June. He has not been formally identified, the center reported.

	<p>L89 was not seen in 2022.</p> <p>The report shows at least a few signs of hope, Weiss said. The J and K pods both produced one female calf each.</p> <p>“These are genuine things to celebrate and to be happy about,” he said.</p> <p>This week, the J pod has been back out near the San Juan Islands socializing and foraging, Weiss said. “They’re looking good to me, behaviorally.”</p>
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Crime, Criminals

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HEADLINE	09/29 Texas police: arrest, 5 fatally shot
SOURCE	https://www.upi.com/Top_News/US/2022/09/29/McGregor-Texas-shooting/8111664505458/
GIST	<p>Sept. 29 (UPI) -- Police in the small Texas city of McGregor said a suspect was in custody after five people were shot and killed Thursday morning.</p> <p>Sgt. Ryan Howard of the Texas Department of Public Safety confirmed the death toll to reporters during a press briefing, stating the suspect was arrested following a police-involved shooting.</p> <p>The identifies of the victims and the suspect would be released later, he said, adding there was little he could divulge about the incident as it was still under investigation.</p> <p>"It's over but of course we want the successful healing of the community," he said. "This is tragic news to actually have to give out."</p> <p>The shooting occurred Thursday morning in the city of McGregor, home to some 5,500 people that is located just west of Waco.</p> <p>Jimmy Hering, the mayor of McGregor, told KCEN-TV that police responded to a 7:30 a.m. report of shots fired at a residence in the town.</p> <p>On arrival at the scene, officers came under gunfire from the suspect and returned fire before being taken into custody, he said. It was unknown if the suspect was wounded in the exchange.</p> <p>"This terrible and senseless act of violence has devastated our town," Hering said. "While the families are being notified of the details, we ask that you keep them, the officers and the community of McGregor in your thoughts and prayers.</p> <p>The Troy Independent School District announced online that all middle school, freshman and junior varsity football games have been canceled for the night due to the shooting.</p> <p>"Our thoughts and prayers go out to all involved," it said.</p>
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HEADLINE	09/29 Stash stolen vehicles found in Parkland
SOURCE	https://mynorthwest.com/3651746/the-crime-blotter-cops-find-big-stash-of-stolen-vehicles-in-parkland/
GIST	<p>According to the Pierce County Sheriff's Office, deputies were dispatched to a residence in the 10200 block of D. Street E. in Parkland because a GPS tracker indicated a stolen vehicle was there.</p>

	<p>A deputy found the vehicle and discovered several other stolen vehicles, which prompted further investigation, and a warrant was granted to search exterior areas.</p> <p>Deputies found eight stolen vehicles at the location, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2010 Dodge Challenger (stolen from Everett) • 2019 Ford Explorer (stolen from Bellevue) • 2004 Toyota Sequoia (stolen from the Waller area) • 2005 Ford F-250 (stolen from unincorporated King County) • 2015 Chevy Corvette (stolen from unincorporated Clark County) • 2022 Honda Ruckus scooter (stolen from unincorporated King County) • 2020 Victory cargo trailer (stolen from the Gig Harbor area) • 1967 Buick Oldsmobile (stolen from Tacoma) <p>Deputies did not find anyone in the home. According to the Pierce County Sheriff's Office, the warrant only covered outside the property.</p> <p>All vehicles were towed to a secure lot to be searched, and fingerprints were taken.</p> <p>The investigation continues.</p>
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HEADLINE	09/29 Charge: ex-NSA worker tried to sell secrets
SOURCE	https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2022/sep/29/jareh-dalke-former-nsa-employee-charged-sell-us-se/
GIST	<p>DENVER – A former National Security Agency employee from Colorado is accused of trying to sell classified information to a hostile foreign government in an attempt to pay off his debts and “help balance” the world’s scales, according to court documents released Thursday.</p> <p>But while Jareh Sebastian Dalke, 30, believed he was talking to a representative of a particular nation “with many interests that are adverse to the United States,” he was actually talking to an undercover FBI agent, according to his arrest affidavit. After initially sharing excerpts of classified documents and one full document this summer, Dalke was arrested Wednesday after he allegedly agreed to transmit more information using a secure connection investigators had set up at Denver’s train station.</p> <p>Dalke, who is charged with three violations of the Espionage Act, appeared in Denver federal court Thursday. He is being represented by a lawyer from the federal public defender’s office, which does not comment publicly on their cases.</p> <p>The arrest affidavit did not identify the country Dalke allegedly believed he was providing information to, but it noted that he speaks basic Spanish and Russian and that he tried to verify that the undercover agent was actually working for the foreign government, rather than “americans (sic) trying to stifle a patriot,” by using a website for the Russian government’s external intelligence agency.</p> <p>Dalke also requested that the agent verify their association with the foreign government by posting on an official website or through a report in one of the media services associated with its government, the arrest affidavit said.</p> <p>Dalke, an Army veteran who lives in Colorado Springs, worked for the NSA, the U.S. intelligence agency that collects and analyzes signals from foreign and domestic sources for the purpose of intelligence and counterintelligence, as an information systems security designer for less than a month this summer, according to the affidavit.</p> <p>According to his arrest affidavit, Dalke, who has degrees related to cybersecurity, began communicating by encrypted email with the undercover agent in late July after the agent wrote to him saying the agent had been informed that they should talk about “items of mutual benefit.” At one point, Dalke allegedly told the agent that his heritage “ties back to your country,” which is why he said he has “come to you as opposed to others”, it said.</p>

The documents he shared before his arrest included a threat assessment of the foreign government he believed he was helping, a plan to update a cryptographic program for a federal agency, a threat assessment of sensitive U.S. defense capabilities, some of which relate to the foreign government at issue, and a document related to a “foreign government leader” whose identity or nation is not described, according to the arrest affidavit.

According to the document, Dalke told the undercover agent that he had \$237,000 in debts. In 2017, he filed for bankruptcy because of student loan and credit card debts, it said. He allegedly told the undercover agent that providing the classified information for payment was “an opportunity to help balance scales of the world while also tending to my own needs.”

At another point, Dalke said that he did not think the United States is as great as it thinks it once was, the affidavit said.

“It is all about the businesses and their money, not anything about the people or those that serve it to include the military,” he said, according to the document.

The case is the latest prosecution involving a government worker accused of trying to pass classified information to someone they thought was a foreign government representative. Jonathan Toebbe, a Navy nuclear engineer, was arrested along with his wife, Diana, in October 2021 on charges of trying to sell submarine secrets to a foreign government. Both have pleaded guilty and are awaiting sentencing.

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HEADLINE	09/29 Army doctor, spouse arrested in Russia plot
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/09/29/us/army-doctor-russia-plot.html
GIST	<p>A Maryland doctor and her spouse, a U.S. Army doctor, were arrested on Thursday and charged with plotting to give the Russian government medical records of members of the American military, believing that the information could be exploited by the Kremlin, federal prosecutors said.</p> <p>The couple, Dr. Anna Gabrielian, a Baltimore anesthesiologist, and Dr. Jamie Lee Henry, an Army major and staff internist at Fort Bragg, were indicted after they met several times with an undercover F.B.I. agent who they believed was working for the Russian Embassy, prosecutors said.</p> <p>At a hotel in Baltimore on Aug. 17, Dr. Gabrielian told the agent she was “motivated by patriotism toward Russia to provide any assistance she could to Russia, even if it meant being fired or going to jail,” the indictment stated.</p> <p>Dr. Henry told the agent that, “My point of view is until the United States actually declares war against Russia, I’m able to help as much as I want. At that point, I’ll have some ethical issues I have to work through,” the indictment stated.</p> <p>Dr. Gabrielian replied, “You’ll work through those ethical issues,” according to the indictment. Dr. Gabrielian told the agent that she had instructed her spouse to read “Inside the Aquarium: The Making of a Top Soviet Spy,” a book about the recruitment and training of a Soviet intelligence officer, which she said described the “mentality of sacrificing everything,” according to the indictment.</p> <p>At a meeting with the agent on Aug. 24, Dr. Gabrielian called her spouse a “coward” who was concerned about violating the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act, known as HIPAA, which governs the privacy of a patient’s health records, the indictment stated. Dr. Gabrielian told the agent that she violated the law “all the time,” according to the indictment.</p> <p>A week later, at a hotel in Gaithersburg, Md., Dr. Gabrielian gave the agent medical information on the spouse of an employee of the Office of Naval Intelligence, and highlighted an issue in the records that “Russia could exploit,” as well as the medical records of an Air Force veteran, the indictment stated.</p>

Dr. Henry gave the agent the medical records of at least five patients at Fort Bragg, including a retired Army officer, a Defense Department employee and the spouse of an Army veteran, the indictment stated.

Dr. Gabrielian, 36, was charged in U.S. District Court for the District of Maryland with one count of conspiracy and two counts of wrongful disclosure of individually identifiable health information.

Dr. Henry, 39, was charged with one count of conspiracy and five counts of wrongful disclosure of individually identifiable health information. Conspiracy is punishable by up to five years in prison and each count relating to the disclosure of medical records is punishable by up to 10 years in prison.

David Walsh-Little, a lawyer for Dr. Henry, declined to comment on the charges on Thursday. Teresa Whalen, a lawyer for Dr. Gabrielian, did not immediately respond to an email and a phone message.

The indictment did not disclose where Dr. Gabrielian works, although the Maryland Board of Physicians lists Johns Hopkins Hospital in Baltimore as her primary practice setting.

“We were shocked to learn about this news this morning and intend to fully cooperate with investigators,” Kim Hoppe, a spokeswoman for Johns Hopkins Medicine, said in a statement.

An Army spokesman referred questions about the case to the Justice Department, but confirmed that Dr. Henry entered active duty service in May 2007, is currently assigned to Fort Bragg as a staff internist and has no combat deployments.

During the Aug. 17 meeting at the Baltimore hotel, Dr. Henry told the agent that he looked into joining the Russian Army after Russia invaded Ukraine in February, but Russia wanted people with “combat experience” and he did not have any, the indictment stated.

“The way I am viewing what is going on in Ukraine now is that the United States is using Ukrainians as a proxy for their own hatred toward Russia,” Dr. Henry told the agent, according to the indictment.

Dr. Gabrielian told the agent on Aug. 17 that she had previously reached out to the Russian Embassy by email and phone, offering Russia her and her spouse’s assistance, according to the indictment.

Dr. Gabrielian, describing how she and Dr. Henry could help Russia, suggested that their access to medical records should not be wasted on trivial matters, the indictment stated.

“It has to be something massively important,” she told the undercover agent, according to the indictment, “not just check if this person has polyps.”

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HEADLINE	09/29 Russian oligarch, associates indicted
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/09/29/us/politics/russian-oligarch-sanctions-citizenship.html
GIST	<p>WASHINGTON — One of the most prominent of Russia’s oligarchs, Oleg V. Deripaska, and two of his associates were charged with conspiring to violate sanctions imposed by the United States, including by arranging for his girlfriend to travel to America to give birth so that their children would have U.S. citizenship, federal prosecutors said on Thursday.</p> <p>Mr. Deripaska’s girlfriend, Ekaterina Olegovna Voronina, entered the country in 2020 with assistance from the two associates and gave birth, making the oligarch’s child an American citizen, according to an indictment unsealed on Thursday in Federal District Court in Manhattan.</p> <p>She tried to repeat the maneuver this year, but was turned away, the indictment said. She was charged with making false statements to authorities who interviewed her after she arrived in Los Angeles in June on a private jet paid for by Mr. Deripaska, claiming her parents — not Mr. Deripaska — paid for the jet and a rental home in Beverly Hills.</p>

The associates are accused of conducting financial transactions for Mr. Deripaska in the United States, including arranging hundreds of thousands of dollars' worth of care and housing for his baby and girlfriend in Los Angeles, and facilitating the sale of a music studio in Burbank, Calif., for more than \$3 million.

Prosecutors said that the transactions violated sanctions imposed in 2018 against Mr. Deripaska and his mammoth aluminum empire for profiting from the "malign activities" of Russia around the world, including its annexation of Crimea in 2014.

In announcing the sanctions, the Trump administration [cited accusations](#) that Mr. Deripaska, who has ties to President Vladimir V. Putin of Russia, had participated in extortion, racketeering and bribery and that he had ordered the murder of a businessman.

People and businesses on sanctions lists are barred from engaging in transactions with Americans and U.S. businesses, including financial institutions.

Damian Williams, the U.S. attorney for the Southern District of New York, said in a statement that the indictment of Mr. Deripaska "signals the United States' ongoing support for the people of Ukraine in the face of continued Russian belligerence."

Prosecutors also announced that they intend to initiate forfeiture proceedings for assets linked to Mr. Deripaska, including the proceeds of the sale of the music studio and homes in New York's Greenwich Village and on Washington's Embassy Row.

The indictment comes nearly a year after the [F.B.I. searched the homes](#) in New York and Washington, and more than six months after the Biden administration announced the [creation of a Justice Department task force](#) to seize the assets of billionaire oligarchs who have aided Mr. Putin in his invasion of Ukraine.

The head of the task force, Andrew C. Adams, criticized Mr. Deripaska in a statement on Thursday for "hypocrisy in seeking comfort and citizenship in the United States, while enjoying the fruits of a ruthless, anti-democratic regime."

Over the years, Mr. Deripaska had employed an army of lobbyists, lawyers and consultants around the world to help him build and protect his empire or to try to maintain his access to the United States. At one point, his roster of advisers included Paul Manafort, who would go on to serve as Donald J. Trump's campaign chairman in 2016 and who was convicted in 2018 of financial fraud and other crimes related to his work for Russia-aligned Ukrainian interests.

After the sanctions were levied against Mr. Deripaska in 2018, his companies launched an [intensive lobbying and legal campaign](#) that resulted in the companies — but not the oligarch himself — being [granted sanctions relief](#) by the United States under a deal that [left his allies with majority ownership](#) of his most important company, including transferring shares to a trust for his older children.

Mr. Deripaska later [sued the U.S. government](#), demanding it lift sanctions against him, which he claimed were motivated by political animus against Russia. The lawsuit said the sanctions had led to "the wholesale devastation" of his "wealth, reputation and economic livelihood," reducing his net worth by more than \$7.5 billion, while pushing his remaining businesses "to the brink of collapse."

The [lawsuit was dismissed](#).

The lawyer who represented Mr. Deripaska in that case declined to comment on the charges unveiled Thursday. A spokeswoman for the oligarch did not respond to a message seeking comment.

Months after Mr. Deripaska filed the lawsuit, one of his employees in the United States in recent years, a naturalized American citizen named Olga Shriki, helped with the sale of a music studio owned by the

oligarch for more than \$3 million, then attempted to transfer the proceeds to an account in Russia linked to the oligarch, according to the indictment.

Ms. Shriki also purchased clothes and iPhones for Mr. Deripaska, which were transported to Russia by his girlfriend, as well as flower arrangements to be delivered to his “social contacts” in the United States and Canada, including “two Easter gift deliveries to a U.S. television host” and two flower deliveries to a former member of Canada’s parliament, according to prosecutors.

At one point, she was asked to obtain American Eagle-brand T-shirts in extra-large size for Mr. Deripaska. “Could you find them and urgently send them?” another Deripaska associate messaged Ms. Shriki, the indictment said.

She helped make arrangements for Mr. Deripaska’s girlfriend around the time of the birth of their first child in California, including renting a two-story penthouse apartment in Beverly Hills and arranging “at least five nannies and a housekeeper,” according to prosecutors. Ms. Shriki helped obtain a U.S. passport and birth certificate for the baby, the latter of which omitted the father’s name, spelling the child’s name “using a variation of Deripaska’s surname with a couple of the letters changed,” according to the indictment.

When Mr. Deripaska’s girlfriend reached out in April asking for assistance making similar arrangements for giving birth to another child in Los Angeles, Ms. Shriki responded that she was busy with other full-time work and instead instructed another Deripaska associate on how to make arrangements, according to the indictment.

In addition to the charge of conspiring to violate sanctions, Ms. Shriki was charged with obstruction of justice for deleting records sought by a grand jury.

Federal agents arrested Ms. Shriki around 6 a.m. Thursday morning at her home in Jersey City, N.J., where she lives with her husband, her two small children and her mother, people with knowledge of the matter said. Dressed in pinstriped pants and a dark green shirt, she appeared in federal court in Lower Manhattan later in the day before a magistrate judge, James L. Cott, and was released on a \$2 million bond, partly secured by her home.

J. Bruce Maffeo, a lawyer for Ms. Shriki, declined to comment.

The other Deripaska associate, Natalia Mikhaylovna Bardakova, was charged with making false statements to F.B.I. agents who met her at the airport in Los Angeles in June as she waited for the arrival of Ms. Voronina, Mr. Deripaska’s girlfriend.

Ms. Bardakova, Ms. Voronina and Mr. Deripaska are Russian nationals. They have not been arrested and are considered fugitives, the U.S. attorney’s office said.

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HEADLINE	09/29 Gunfight in Everett, businesses damaged
SOURCE	https://www.kiro7.com/news/local/gunfight-erupts-everett-several-businesses-damaged/E5AS3OXLVNH03HADSCDZIP4CNY/
GIST	<p>A gunfight erupted in Everett Wednesday night, damaging multiple businesses, according to the Everett Police Department.</p> <p>Just before 10 p.m., deputies with the Snohomish County Sheriff’s Office who were on a call in the 11800 block of Evergreen Way, heard several gunshots and men leaving the area.</p> <p>When officers with the Everett Police Department arrived, they found shots had been fired in the parking lot of El Taco Boom, located at 11802 Evergreen Way.</p>

	<p>After a search of the area, no suspects were found.</p> <p>During the investigation, officers determined a car that had been parked in front of the business, when three men approached on foot and began to shoot at the car.</p> <p>As the car sped away, someone inside the car began to exchange gunfire with the three men.</p> <p>The unoccupied car was found a short time later. It was impounded pending a search warrant.</p> <p>During the gunfight, four businesses were hit, including El Taco Boom, which was open and had 12 customers inside. Three unoccupied vehicles were hit by gunfire as well.</p>
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